

Miyet named U.N. peacekeeping head

PARIS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has named French diplomat Bernard Miyet as head of peacekeeping operations, the French foreign ministry said Tuesday. Mr. Miyet, 50, currently Paris' representative to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), will succeed Mr. Annan himself who held the post before being elected U.N. chief in December. In another appointment, Polish Brigadier-General Boleslaw Izdorski is to replace Jordanian General Hasan Ahaza as head of the U.N. military observer force in the Republic of Tajikistan. U.N. Security Council President Hishashi Owada confirmed the appointment in a letter to Mr. Annan, released Tuesday. The United Nations has deployed a total 44 military observers from nine countries in Tajikistan, where they have been monitoring fragile peace accords since December 1994.

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King receives get-well calls

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday received phone calls from several Arab and foreign leaders congratulating him on the successful knee surgery he underwent three days ago. Among those calling the King were Saudi King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz, the presidents of Venezuela and Colombia as well as Saudi Arabia's Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz. The leaders congratulated the King and wished him a speedy recovery and continued good health.

Swedish official to visit Jordan

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Swedish Under-Secretary of State Jan Eliasson will visit Jordan on Jan. 30-31 for talks with Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, the foreign ministry announced on Tuesday. Mr. Eliasson will then make a brief visit to Lebanon to mark the opening of the Swedish embassy in Beirut. While there, he will also have talks with Foreign Minister Fares Bouez, among others.

Sister of Saudi monarch dies

RIYADH (AP) — A sister of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd died Monday, a royal court spokesman said. Shaikha Bint Abdul Aziz Ben Abdul Rahman Al Saud was 82. The statement, carried by the official Saudi Press Agency, did not give a reason for her death. It said she would be buried Tuesday after Friday prayers at Riyadh's main Imam Turki Mosque.

Mubarak to meet Chirac in Paris

PARIS (R) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak will visit Paris on Monday for talks on the Middle East peace process with French President Jacques Chirac, Mr. Chirac's office said on Tuesday. Mr. Mubarak will visit France after attending the world economic forum in Davos, Switzerland, at the weekend. The two leaders will meet at Mr. Chirac's Elysee Palace at 3.30 p.m. (1430 GMT). Mr. Chirac's spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said the meeting would give the two leaders a chance to discuss the Middle East pullout from most of Hebron.

Belgium gives \$10m to Palestinians

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Belgium signed a deal Tuesday to provide the Palestinians \$10 million in aid to build hospitals and electrical networks during a visit by its Foreign Minister Erik Derycke here. Belgium's Secretary of State for Cooperation Reginald Moreels signed the deal with his Palestinian counterpart Nabil Shaath after talks with Mr. Derycke in Gaza City. Mr. Shaath said the package would provide \$3 million to build hospitals in the Gaza Strip and another \$7 million to extend electricity to rural areas around the West Bank self-rule area of Nabulus. Mr. Derycke met the previous evening with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who after the talks warned that the Palestinians were "on the red line of starvation" after nearly a year under a crippling Israeli closure.

Jordan, PNA agree to give new push to economic ties

Arafat briefs King and Prince Hassan on Palestinian moves

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on Tuesday discussed bilateral relations and agreed to reactivate the work of joint committees, particularly in the area of economic cooperation. The discussions and decisions came during talks between Palestinian President Yasser Arafat held here with His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and senior officials. King Hussein, who received Mr. Arafat at Al Nadwa Palace, reaffirmed Jordan's support for the Palestinian people and their struggle to regain their legitimate rights on their national soil, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said. Crown Prince Hassan and Mr. Arafat, who flew back to the Gaza Strip after the

talks, discussed the latest developments in the Middle East peace process with particular focus on the Palestinian-Israeli track after the recent signing of the Hebron agreement, Petra said. The Crown Prince and Mr. Arafat also reviewed Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in various areas and agreed to relaunch meetings of the two sides after the 'Eid Al Fitr holidays, Petra said. According to Omar Khatib, the Palestinian ambassador to Jordan, Mr. Arafat also discussed the Palestinian quest to set up air and sea ports in the Gaza Strip and to open a safe passage between the Mediterranean strip and the West Bank as called for in the interim autonomy agreements signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). "The Jordanian side was briefed on our quest to open negotiations with Israel

early next month to specifically discuss the airport and the port in Gaza and the safe passage," Mr. Khatib told the Associated Press. Israel and the Palestinians have been arguing over security arrangements at the airport, but Palestinian officials have said the Israelis are really blocking opening of the airport as a means of pressuring the PNA to negotiations. Mr. Khatib said both sides also agreed on continuous consultation through an existing joint committee rather than forming a new one to provide guidance to the Palestinians in negotiations with Israel. Mr. Khatib, who attended Mr. Arafat's three-hour talks here, said the PNA president also discussed Israeli troop withdrawals from rural areas of the West Bank and the final shape of

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Palestinians vow to ignore ban on building in Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — Palestinian officials said Tuesday they would ignore "illegal" orders by the Israeli army banning Palestinian construction in parts of the Israeli-controlled zone of this divided city. General Uzi Dayan, army commander for the West Bank, issued orders on Sunday halting building and renovations in Palestinian houses near Jewish settlements in the Old City "to prevent a security risk to settlers," an army spokesman said. The order also specified an end to building "which has already been started."

"These orders are illegal and infringe on the powers of the Hebron municipality and the Palestinian National Authority," Hebron Mayor Mustapha Natshe told AFP. "This is a violation of the Hebron agreement which gives us civilian powers in the Old City. I will give orders that building and renovation continue," Mr. Natshe said. The ban would stop renovation efforts in some 122 Palestinian houses in the Old City, he added. The issue of building in the Israeli zone is one of the most sensitive under the Hebron handover implemented on Jan. 17, which left Israeli forces in around a fifth of the city to protect some 450 Jewish settlers living there. Under the Hebron deal sealed two days before the handover, the Palestinian National Authority holds civilian authority over building and property laws in the Israeli zone, except over Jewish property.

But after Israeli fears of sniper attacks on Jewish enclaves in the heart of the Old City, Palestinians must coordinate with the army over any new building more than two stories tall near the settlements. But the Hebron deal specifies that the limitation does not apply to "new construction or renovation that has already been approved." Palestinians have stepped up renovations in the past year to prevent Jewish settlers from seizing empty neighbouring houses to a bid to expand their enclaves. Since the Hebron handover, settlers have vowed a campaign of new building. Some 20,000 of Hebron's total 120,000 Palestinian residents live in the Israeli-controlled sector of the West Bank city.

Probe begins into Israeli scandal; Bar-On sues TV

TEL AVIV (AP) — The man at the centre of an alleged influence-trading scam in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Tuesday he had filed a slander complaint against the television station that made the allegations. Roni Bar-On, who resigned as attorney general after one day in office earlier this month, was questioned by police Tuesday about his involvement in the alleged affair. As he left a Tel Aviv police station, Mr. Bar-On said he had filed a formal criminal complaint against the director general of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and the reporter who broadcast the story. "I accused them of slander," he told reporters. Under Israeli law, slander is both a criminal and civil offence. Authorities will now investigate the complaint and decide whether to file charges. The IBA's Channel One television, citing anonymous sources, reported last week

that Mr. Bar-On's appointment was part of a deal between senior officials in Mr. Netanyahu's office and the ultra-orthodox Shas Party, which holds a deciding vote in Mr. Netanyahu's coalition government. According to the report, Shas agreed to vote in favour of the Hebron troop redeployment deal if Mr. Bar-On was appointed attorney general. The station said Mr. Bar-On, in turn, agreed to drop a case against Shas leader Aryeh Deri, who is standing trial on embezzlement and fraud charges. Mr. Netanyahu said he knew nothing about such a deal and called for a police investigation, which opened Sunday. "If the investigation is quick, efficient, without favouritism, without politicisation, free from tendentious attacks or all sorts of gossip — but going straight to the truth, I will be the first to welcome it, and I was the first to call for it," Mr. Netanyahu told Israel's army radio on

Tuesday. Mr. Deri has also denied the existence of a deal. Mr. Bar-On, an activist in Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party, ended up resigning after one day amid criticism that he was a judicial lightweight chosen for his political connections. The television station has so far refused to reveal its sources. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz said Tuesday that police believe the station has transcripts of tapes made secretly by one of the people involved in the affair. A police source told the Associated Press that there is no new evidence or independent testimony yet to support the television report. Also questioned Tuesday were two lawyers close to Mr. Netanyahu, David Shimron and Yitzhak Molho. "What I can tell you is that I came here to fulfill my civic duty to give testimony. What can I do?" Mr. Molho, told reporters outside the national fraud unit in Jaffa near Tel Aviv.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat kisses His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan as he is received by the Crown Prince, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and other officials upon his arrival in Amman on Tuesday (photo by Yousef Allan)

Israeli rightist deputies said amenable to return of Golan

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Four right-wing members of Israel's parliament came out in favour Tuesday of returning the Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for a peace accord. The four, three from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud bloc and another from the Geshet party of Foreign Minister David Levy, explained that Israel has no ideological reasons for keeping the strategic plateau that Syria demands in exchange for the opening of diplomatic relations. One of the four, the hawkish Rubi Rivlin of Likud, told Israel Radio that an agreement with Syria could be based on the 1979 Camp David accords with Egypt in which Israel agreed to return the Sinai peninsula. "We need to go to them to talk about peace without conditions," Mr. Rivlin said. "If the strategy of the Syrians will be peace, we need to talk without preconditions and about the questions of peace and one

of the questions is the Golan Heights." Mr. Rivlin and Geshet Deputy Michael Kleiner said their support for returning the Golan would be conditional on the government resisting demands that it give up large parts of the West Bank to the Palestinians. The Israeli-Syrian peace process has been deadlocked over Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to accept the principle of a withdrawal from the Golan in exchange for peace as a starting point for resuming negotiations which have been frozen since last February. Mr. Netanyahu on Monday voiced unusual optimism about the possibility for renewing the negotiations with Syria. "I am convinced that there is a chance we will find a formula that will permit the resumption of direct dialogue," he said. "This government is interested in reopening the talks with Syria. I guess that with the

goodwill from all sides and with help from the United States, we will reach this." "We will know very soon if the negotiations are going to resume or not," Mr. Netanyahu said, without elaborating. But Finance Minister Dan Meridor was more downbeat on Tuesday, warning that "there is still a big gap between our positions for opening negotiations." Israeli Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, head of the Third Way Party that sits in Mr. Netanyahu's coalition, insisted the government would not give up the Golan Heights. "I don't want to close the way to peace," Mr. Kahalani told Israel Radio. "But we need to go the way that will allow us to keep our citizens there... It's very important that before the elections you say things you will do after the elections." Mr. Kahalani was referred

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GCC panel meets on dispute

JEDDAH (AFP) — Four Gulf Arab foreign ministers were meeting Tuesday night in Saudi Arabia to discuss the dispute between Qatar and Bahrain, a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) official said. "The four-way committee will meet late Tuesday in Jeddah without the Qatari and Bahraini foreign ministers," the officials said. The committee is comprised of the other four GCC members: Chairman Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The official said that "Qatar and Bahrain opposed a draft for an accord" to normalise their relations, which are tense because of a territorial conflict. The Omani minister of state for foreign affairs, Yousef Ben Alawi, said Tuesday in Muscat before leaving for Jeddah that "Bahrain and Qatar won't participate in the four-way committee meeting." Mr. Ben Alawi said the committee's foreign ministers would review "recent contacts with Qatar and Bahrain before announcing the next stage for clearing the air between the two countries."

Sudan says its forces advance in east, assails U.S. statement

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — The Sudanese government said on Tuesday the army was advancing against the forces which attacked in the east of the country two weeks ago. Sudan is also sending out more envoys to try to persuade other countries that it is the victim of Ethiopian and Eritrean aggression, rather than under attack by internal rebels. In Cairo, the Arab League said it opposed any foreign intervention in Sudan but failed to identify which countries it might have in mind. Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid made the remark during a meeting with Sudan's Ambassador to Egypt Ahmad Al Tayeb Al Kordofani, who is also his country's delegate to the Arab League. "The secretary general stressed the need to establish security in Sudan and the importance of neighbouring countries respecting the principle of non-interference. In the internal affairs of others," a statement said. But the statement fell short of blaming any country for the fighting that erupted in eastern Sudan earlier this month, during which Sudanese rebels captured two border towns.

Addis Ababa and Asmara have denied any involvement. Sudan's main opposition figure, Mohammed Osman Al Mirghani, said on Tuesday in Abu Dhabi that government allegations that Ethiopia and Eritrea were backing an opposition offensive launched earlier this month were "lies." The governor of Blue Nile state, the scene of the heaviest fighting since a rebel offensive began on Jan. 12, was quoted on Tuesday as saying the Ethiopian forces and their Sudanese rebel allies were now in retreat. "The Ethiopian... forces and the remnants of the outlaws retreated in the face of the counterattack," Governor Babakir Jaber Kabalo told the official news agency SUNA. "Fighting calmed down on Monday on all battlefronts as the armed forces and the people's defence forces continued their onward advance... The army is pressing ahead with reinforcements to bring the battle to a decisive conclusion," he added. But he gave no details of military operations and added little to previous Sudanese government statements.

The rebels of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which says it alone is responsible for the fighting, has also gone quiet about military events, suggesting stalemate in the field. The Islamist government in Khartoum insists it is fighting foreign invaders but except in a few Arab states, most governments are not taking this claim seriously. Vice-President Al Zubeir Muhammad Saleh, who earlier this month explained Khartoum's view of the conflict in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Syria, was to leave on an Asian tour later on Tuesday, official sources said. Federal Rule Minister Ali Al Haj Muhammad has gone to southern Africa on a similar mission "to acquaint presidents and peoples with the Zionist-American plot against Sudan and Africa in general," Information Minister Al Tayeb Ibrahim Khair said. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement carried by SUNA, hit back at a U.S. embassy statement which suggested the government was exaggerating

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UAE accuses Iran of territorial violation

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) accused Tehran on Tuesday of violating its territorial waters when an Iranian navy ship entered the area to tow a small cargo ship. Foreign Ministry acting Under-Secretary Saif Saeed summoned Iranian Ambassador Hussein Sadeki and handed him a protest over the Jan. 19 incident, the official news agency WAM reported. "The protest letter demanded that such violations and unjustified behaviour not be repeated as they adversely affect relations between the two Muslim neighbours," the agency said. "It also asked Iran to comply with international norms and the principles of good neighbourhood which governs their relations." The agency said an Iranian navy vessel entered the UAE's territorial waters to tow a small ship carrying cars, cement and other building materials. It did not say where the incident occurred and the agency did not identify the boat.

UNSCOM says Iraq has to do more to satisfy it

BAGHDAD (R) — The discovery in Iraq of four wrecked missile engines has not satisfied the United Nations that Iraq has destroyed all of its banned rockets, a U.N. arms official in Baghdad said on Tuesday. "They (the engines) may close some of the gap but will not resolve all our concerns," Roger Knight, assistant director of Baghdad's Ongoing Monitoring and Verification (OMV) Centre, told Reuters. A U.N. ballistic missile team spent three weeks in Baghdad this month supervising Iraqi digs of sites where the Iraqis said they had unilaterally destroyed and buried a large number of their long-range missiles. Mr. Knight said the team of 10 experts under Frenchman Michael Bordin left Baghdad on Jan. 25. Under terms that ended the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait, Iraq is obliged to destroy missiles with ranges greater than 150 kilometres. The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) overseeing destruction of all such Iraqi missiles in addition to its nuclear, biological and chemical arms says it still suspects that Iraq has not yet come clean on its banned rockets. Mr. Knight said Iraqis used bulldozers and other earth-moving equipment in latest digs for missile parts. "Four engines and other components were unearthed," he said. He said the excavations, the first on such a large-scale in search of banned weapons, were carried out as part of an Iraqi initiative to try to substantiate claims that all its banned missiles were destroyed.

Home News

Programme to encourage women's electoral participation

AMMAN (J.T.) — A three-day training programme to encourage women to participate in local elections was initiated at Princess Basma Women's Resources Centre Tuesday, according to a Queen Alia Fund (QAF) for Social Development statement.

The programme was jointly organised by the centre and the Jordanian National Forum for women in cooperation with the Canadian Embassy in Amman.

Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Malloy stated in the opening ceremony, attended by Centre Director Farah Daghistani, that Jordan has made great steps towards political maturity and enhancing its democratic process through parliamentary and local elections.

He said the Canadian government supports all activities aimed to promote women's role in society as women, he maintained, constitute the most effective factor for social change, the statement said.

Mr. Malloy described Jordan as most suc-

cessful in dealing with the changes taking place in the international arena and as one of the most successful countries in implementing Beijing's Platform of Action concerning women.

He expressed optimism for further Canadian-Jordanian cooperation in women-related issues.

Secretary General of the National Forum for Women Rand Hindawi said in her speech that women must participate in elections and practise their right to vote.

A total of 18 women, who plan to run for municipal by-elections scheduled for next month, are participating in the programme.

The programme involves lectures and practical exercises in various issues related to elections such as election campaigning and management, upgrading leadership and communication skills, identification of local community needs.

The participants will also be educated regarding laws governing municipal and election activities, the statement concluded.

Danish institute signs memorandum with RSS

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Danish Technology Institute of Denmark (DTI) and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) yesterday signed a memorandum to establish a partnership to promote scientific and technological cooperation, according to an RSS statement.

The agreement provides for mutual recognition of certification and testing, conducting joint venture projects in the Middle East, cooperation in joint research projects in various fields of technology within the framework of the European Union (EU) scope of funding, and human resource development and technical training.

The memorandum also provides for software development for industrial application, and cooperation and exchange of

expertise in the field of building technology, the statement said.

Under the terms of the memorandum, DTI will also provide technical support and training to RSS staff deemed necessary for further cooperation.

For its part, RSS will conduct all studies and necessary testing for DTI in the Middle East region and both institutions will institute newly graduated student exchanges and provide them with necessary job training.

The DTI is an independent institute aiming at addressing industrial and societal needs through the development and dissemination of technological innovations, the statement said.

Jordanian delegation leaves for Paris

AMMAN (Petra) — A senior level Jordanian delegation headed by Planning Minister Rima Khalaf leaves today for Paris to participate in two days of meetings of the Joint Jordanian-French Committee, due to convene in Paris on Jan. 30.

The committee will discuss scopes of bilateral cooperation in cultural, scientific, technical, electronic media, water and agriculture, tourism, legal and administrative sciences and health fields.

Auxiliary to the meeting, Dr. Khalaf is slated to hold talks with French officials on

means of further developing economic relations.

The Jordanian delegation includes Jordanian Ambassador to Paris Sbarif Fawwaz Sbaraf, Ministry of Finance Secretary General Suleiman Hafedh, Director General of the Antiquities Department Ghazi Bisbeh, Ministry of Planning Assistant Secretary General for International Cooperation Salem Ghawi, Ministry of Planning Bilateral Exchange Department Director Mustafa Saleh and the Jordanian cultural attaché to the embassy in Paris.

Local firm wins tender for construction of Islamic funeral home

AMMAN (Petra) — The General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) Monday offered a tender to a local company for the construction of an Islamic funeral home.

This is slated to be constructed on a plot of land in the Mahatta area on the outskirts of Amman, donated by Amman municipality.

GUVS President Abdullah Khatib signed the JD 210,000 contract with the company's director.

The company will also construct a refrigerated area for storage at an additional cost of JD 40,000. It also will include facilities for washing the dead in accordance with Islamic law.

The project has been directed to alleviate

the suffering of bereaved families.

The home will arrange, upon request, for the retrieval of necessary certificates from the Ministry of Health in the Amman Municipality as well as the Civil Registration Department.

The centre will include reception and waiting halls and a small prayer area, so that prayer can be performed concurrently, instead of taking the body to a mosque elsewhere.

GUVS is currently involved in drafting regulations governing the home's operation.

The funeral home will charge those who are financially secure a nominal cost for services rendered.

The linguistic origins of Ramadan and other interpretations

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Prophet Mohammad was quoted as saying: "Thank God for the month of Sha'ban has ended and the month of Ramadan has commenced."

Ramadan is the holy month for all Muslims in which they fast from dawn till sunset following the dictates of the Koran.

According to the holy book, God has excused the sick and travellers providing they compensate for the days in which they broke their fast within the year before the next Ramadan.

However, for those who have deliberately indulged during the month, reparations are augmented such as fasting continuously for 60 days, feeding 60 needy people or freeing slaves.

The last being, according to the Koran, a method used

to put a final end to slavery.

Certain ethics are related to Ramadan, such as goodwill towards one's fellows, strengthening relations between family and strangers, being merciful, amending for past errors, practising courtesy, these are the values Muslims are instructed to cultivate in themselves and spread to the greater society.

One month, tradition says, in an environment of purity, faith and honesty can help strengthen a person and Muslims should seize the opportunity to prevent wrongdoing as the Prophet Mohammad says "God welcomes repentance and forgiveness."

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs holds special lectures during the month, introducing Ramadan in all of its different aspects and providing a venue for donors who desire to succour those less

fortunate than they, as Ramsadan is the month of mercy and goodwill, Rafiq El Khatib director of Al Haram Al Sharif told the Jordan Times.

Ramadan was a holy month even before Islam — it was a month in which fighting was prohibited and people lived in peaceful surroundings and different meanings have been allocated to the word; in Arameic the word "ramad" means "intense heat" as in ancient times Ramadan was observed in hot summers.

Astrologers believe that "ramad" is the heat inside of every fasting person, due to lack of liquids, and "another opinion is that ramad" is the heat or fire which burns the sins out of the soul by way of good deeds.

The Prophet Mohammad maintained that "He who fasts the month of Ramadan in true belief,

UNRWA workers to hold extraordinary session

By Ghaila Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Workers from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) five areas of operation will hold an extraordinary meeting here in February in an attempt to study the administrative policy of the agency and take necessary measures to urge UNRWA to meet their demands, staff sources told the Jordan Times Tuesday.

The sources said UNRWA employees held a similar meeting for the agency workers two months ago and prepared an agenda for the meeting, listing their demands.

However, they added, the agency failed to respond and so the workers cancelled the meeting.

"The employees in the agency's five areas of operation previously issued demands which include better health, education and social services, salary increases to cope with the rising cost of living and end-of-service compensations comparable with those offered by the Jordanian government, a source said.

The administration is dis- regarding our demands. And our situation is now worse than before," one source said.

He added that the agency employees sent a cable to UNRWA Secretary General Peter Hansen to invite him to attend the meeting in February which will represent about 20,000 UNRWA employees.

"Mr. Hansen did not

respond to our call and it appears that this administration is even worse than the previous one," he said.

Had Mr. Hansen been interested in the meeting, he would have met with the Jordanian authorities and representatives of Palestinian refugees during his last visit to the Kingdom, the source said.

He added that UNRWA employees are entitled to retirement only after 30 years of service and that they demanded eligibility for this benefit after 25 years of service.

The source said if the agency fails to heed their demands, employees in the five areas of operation will take serious measures against UNRWA.

"It seems the administration in UNRWA does not appreciate dialogue and that they will not respond to our call unless we stage a general strike in all areas of UNRWA operations," he asserted, adding that a "general strike will have a stronger impact on the agency's work."

The agency operates in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank. UNRWA's operations in Jordan are the largest as it hosts the largest number of refugees.

UNRWA employs 20,000 people of whom the majority are Palestinian refugees who benefit from the agency's health, education and social services.

Editor-in-chief of tabloid arrested at home

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The editor-in-chief of the weekly satirical *Abed Rabbo* has been ordered detained by the Amman prosecutor on charges of slandering a deputy and a minister, official sources said.

Efforts to set Yousef Gheishan free on bail failed Monday as the court did not respond to his attorney's request.

"We submitted a request to free my client on bail but the court did not respond as its work day was over," Defence Lawyer Habis Shboul said.

Mr. Gheishan was arrested in his Madaba home at 11:30 p.m. Monday night and is charged by Amman Prosecutor Jamal Zou'bi of slandering and tarnishing another person's image and dignity.

On Thursday, Responsible Editor Omar Nadi was detained for three days on the same charges.

A lawsuit was filed against the editors of the newspaper after it published a caricature and a news item in two separate issues describing Islamist Deputy Ibrahim Zaid Kilani as a "hypocrite" and accusing Minister of Public Works Abdul Hadi Majali of stealing cars.

Mr. Zou'bi told the Jordan Times that his decision to arrest Mr. Gheishan came after questioning Mr. Nadi, who was arrested on the same charges.

"During questioning, Mr. Nadi informed me that he had been on vacation and he

submitted evidence that he had requested a sick leave, proving that he was not the editor when one of the slanderous items was published," Mr. Zou'bi said.

On Tuesday, Mr. Zou'bi told the Jordan Times that when he questioned Mr. Gheishan, the latter pleaded not guilty to the charges, and claimed that he was not the editor-in-chief of the newspaper.

"He informed me that he was not the editor-in-chief but merely a reporter and that his title position was 'lead pirate,'" Mr. Zou'bi said.

The prosecutor further stated that he is planning to call on Press and Publication Department Director Mohammad Amin and other journalists working for the newspaper to determine who was the editor-in-chief at the time the slanderous material was published.

In a previous interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Gheishan charged that Deputy Kilani and Mr. Majali "are in sensitive positions due to upcoming elections and that is why they decided to file a lawsuit against Mr. Nadi."

He further stated in the interview: "If these news or caricature items had been published six months earlier none of the two would have been interested in filing a lawsuit against us."

On Monday, the Jordan Press Association (JPA) council issued a statement expressing its dismay over the contents of some weekly newspapers, which, the asso-

ciation said, were tarnishing culture, values and tradition.

The association maintained that these newspapers were abusing press freedoms and further warned that journalists who do not abide by press ethics would be punished and possibly expelled from the association.

Several deputies in a parliament session last week expressed their dismay and disapproval over articles being published in some weekly tabloids, which they called "indecent" and "unethical" in their approach.

They described the House as extremely offended by such publications.

In response to their plaints, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kaharati said the government would take action to terminate "indecent, obscene and unacceptable" articles in local publications.

In July of last year, a wave of arrests and questioning of journalists ensued following a statement, issued by Parliament, urging authorities and the media to take measures to put an end to writings which harm national unity and Arab and Islamic values.

His Majesty the King responded by sending a message to Parliament reprimanding some writers who attempt to harm national unity and urging newspapers to live up to the aspirations of the Jordanian people in propagating the values and principles of the Kingdom.

Writer laments lack of funding, differs with ministry over book classification

By Tanya Habbjouha
and Tarek Attalla
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian writer Mousa Barhoumah expressed outrage over a recent decision by the Ministry of Culture not to sponsor his book based in its supposed "immoral" content.

The book in question, entitled "My Book" was approved by the censorial section of the Press and Publications Department on Aug. 6 of last year.

According to Mr. Barhoumah, he has been waiting since that time for the Ministry of Culture to sponsor him as it is their policy to cover 50 per cent of publishing costs for Jordanian authors.

Mr. Barhoumah received a letter on Jan. 16 from Minister of

Culture Ahmed Qudah refusing sponsorship as his book was judged to be immoral by the ministry's reviewing committee, Mr. Barhoumah told the Jordan Times.

"The committee found my book to have sexual connotations and felt that my prose style emulated that of the Koran, which is blasphemous," he explained.

"My Book" is a collection of prose written over a period of six years, and filled with "love poetry and descriptions of women which the committee found offensive," Mr. Barhoumah said.

"I was shocked by the ministry's decision because if such standards are used to judge literary work, then they would eradicate 90 per cent of great Arabic literature," he added.

Mr. Barhoumah cited

several examples of literature that he felt would be subject to such censorship, such as Ummu Al-Qais, Omer Ben Abu Rabia, Najib Mahfouz, and Nizar Qabanni.

"Are we going to remove their works because of morality and offence to religion?" he asked.

Mr. Qudah told the Jordan Times Tuesday that the reviewing committee had "found Mr. Barhoumah's book unsuitable for society."

"If this were true, then why were there no complaints when my prose was published in Al Rai and Al Dustour this past year?" Mr. Barhoumah asked.

Mr. Qudah further stated that it was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture to sponsor such a book when funds were limited with a high number of

writers seeking sponsorship.

"Why should we publish a book under our name that is not appropriate to our culture?" he asked.

The reviewing committee is comprised of professors from different universities and known writers, although "we do not like to name the members," Mr. Qudah stated.

"Our objective is to encourage creativity among our writers and people," he added.

However, Mr. Barhoumah disagreed. "The Ministry of Culture indulges in dictatorship against the mind and creativity," he said.

He opined that it would be futile to appeal the decision, stating "When I write about the woman I love, I do not want to debate it with someone who will tell

me to write it differently — that would limit me."

When this reporter asked Mr. Qudah about the publication of Mr. Barhoumah's prose in newspapers in the past, he replied "I stand by our decision. Mr. Barhoumah is biased in favour of his own views."

In the meantime, "My Book" will be published entirely at the author's expense by the Arab Foundation for Research and Publication in Beirut.

Mr. Barhoumah's main concern is whether the public will read his book for its prose, or "seek it out because of the scandal."

"We are on the doors of the 21st century and there are still ignorant people judging our literary works by their own morals," he concluded.

Minister, directors discuss summer youth camps

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Youth Mohammad Daoudieh Tuesday chaired a meeting for the directors of youth departments in the various governorates to discuss issues related to Al Hussein summer youth camps.

They also discussed the new organisational structure of the ministry, as well as amendments to the laws regulating relations between their departments and sports federations.

Mr. Daoudieh stressed the need to attract larger numbers of youth to Al Hussein youth camps through forging closer coordination with relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions.

He disclosed ministry plans to institutionalise Al Hussein youth camps and create a new department at the ministry for the organisation of these camps.

Mr. Daoudieh said the ministry will provide more support for youth centres stating in this regard 1997 will be the designated Year of the Youth Centres.

The meeting discussed a number of proposals made by directors of youth departments, including the formation of a permanent committee for youth camps, increasing the camp duration to one month from the present three weeks.

What's Going On

EXHIBITIONS

* Ramdaniat exhibition from Wadi Dana Nature Reserve (silver nature jewelry, jams, dried fruits) and Jordan River Designs (JRD) ornaments (tablecloths, candles, embroidered accessories) at JRD showroom, Jabal Amman, Frist Circle (Tel. 613081), until Feb. 10.

* Exhibition on the "Institute of the Arab World in Paris" at the French Cultural Centre, until Feb. 6.

* Paintings by Muhammad Ali Shaker at the Orient Gallery, Issam Ajloui Street, Shmeisani, until Jan. 30.

* Photographic exhibition on the life of the Founder of Pakistan at Quaid-e-Azam Hall, Embassy of Pakistan, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 622787, 624680), until January 31.

* Works by Jordanian artists at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. 30.

Milosevic under pressure as Russia favours protesters

BELGRADE (AFP) — International pressure was back on President Slobodan Milosevic Tuesday, after Russia — Serbia's traditional ally — took the side of the opposition in the two-month political crisis.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov was to meet Mr. Milosevic during the day, after the Kremlin envoy said Monday that his government should accept opposition victories in 14 municipalities — including the capital Belgrade — following Nov. 17 elections.

To do so would "open the way to a resolution of the current solution," Mr. Ivanov was reported as saying by the domestic Tanjug News Agency.

A time for Ivanov's meeting with the president — who is showing no signs of backing down — was not immediately confirmed.

The government's refusal to accept victories by opposition political parties that belong to the together coalition has resulted in daily street protests in Belgrade.

Mr. Ivanov met with a delegation of protesting students earlier Tuesday, after

seeing opposition leaders Vuk Draskovic and Vesna Petic Monday as well as Yugoslav Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic.

In a change of tactics, the opposition from Tuesday plans to hold its daily rally at 8:30 p.m. (1930 GMT) instead of 3:00 p.m.

In doing so, it hopes to draw into the city centre the thousands of Belgrade residents who until now have been demonstrating noisily in their own neighbourhoods to drown out the government-controlled television newscast.

On Monday, the United States lodged a formal protest with the Serbian government about the use of police violence on demonstrators.

Washington's charges d'affaires in Belgrade, Richard Miles, told Mr. Milutinovic that Serbian authorities had "reneged on their pledge" not to use force on demonstrators, the State Department said.

He was referring to two police charges on demonstrators last weekend, in which 20 people were injured.

Mr. Ivanov said Monday that Serbia should accept the findings by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that the opposition had won 14 towns and cities in the elections.

"Russia wants Yugoslavia to find a solution to the current solution, in the interests of unity and prosperity so that the country becomes democratic," he said.

Mr. Draskovic repeated together's position: "The condition of all conditions is the recognition of Nov. 17 results."

"We have no mandate to discuss the results. They have to be recognised and implemented completely, and then, the demonstrations shall stop and the dialogue can start," Mr. Draskovic told reporters.

Russia has traditionally supported Mr. Milosevic, but has kept a relatively low profile during the crisis over the local elections flared up.

Legal experts at Together meanwhile said they would appeal to the Supreme Court of Serbia, after the regime Monday annulled the opposition victory in Belgrade.

A top court, making what it called a final ruling, overturned a decision two weeks ago by the Belgrade Election Commission to recognise Together's victory in the capital where one in five Serbians live.

The decision came as the opposition took control of Nis, the country's second largest town, for the first time in 50 years.

Nis represents perhaps the biggest concession the government has made in the face of the popular protests.

Political analysts believe the government is hardening its stance by recognising only limited success for Together, allowing it uncontested control to only five municipalities — Uzice, Kragujevac, Zrejanin, Lapovo and Nis.

In his Dec. 27 report for the OSCE, former Spanish Premier Felipe Gonzalez maintained that the opposition has also won Piro, Kraljevo, Smederevska Palanka, Vrsac, Soko Banja, Pancevo, Jagodina and Sabac, as well as Belgrade.

Ethnic factor enables Taliban to advance deep into strategic valley

GHORBAND, Afghanistan (AFP) — Thousands of armed locals here are helping the Taliban militia to force a new route into opposition territory after anti-Taliban troops cut the main artery to northern Afghanistan, locals said Tuesday.

Villagers in this key valley gave their backing to the fundamentalist fighters — who share the same ethnic origin as them — as opposition forces Sunday blew up the strategic Salang Highway to stop the Taliban advance.

"More than 1,000 armed people in Shinwari and another 1,000 in Sigard districts, who have joined the Taliban, are fighting against the other side," locals and international aid workers in the Ghorband Valley said.

The villagers have already gone into battle with their new allies and were Tuesday fighting opposition alliance troops around Chardeh, at the end of this valley which starts 80 kilometres northwest of the capital Kabul.

The Ghorband Valley, which the Taliban seized much of last week after taking two strategic towns near here from the opposition, is a "back door" to the fiefdom of northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum, analysts say.

The Taliban could use the narrow and dusty 140 kilometre-long valley to cut through to the central province of Bamian before heading north into the soft underbelly of Gen. Dostum's territory in Baghlan province, they say.

The Salang Highway, the main route to northern Afghanistan, was blocked by

the anti-Taliban coalition — which includes Gen. Dostum and the ousted Afghan government's top commander Ahmad Shah Masood — when they blasted the road, effectively cutting the mountainous country in two.

"I think the country has been physically cut into two after the blockade of the highways," said truck driver Abdul Karim as he turned back after trying to get from Kabul to the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

Hundreds of north-bound vehicles were Tuesday stranded in the Salang Valley after a stretch of the road was blasted away about 100 kilometres north of Kabul late Sunday.

Other drivers complained that even if the Ghorband Valley reopened, the trip through it to the north would take 48 hours driving instead of eight hours on the Salang Highway.

Groups of armed and turbaned ethnic-Pashtoon villagers here, sunning themselves against their mud houses, pledged support for the mainly Pashtoon Taliban in their battle to push northwards.

Locals said although the new allies were already fighting together, no major assault had yet been launched on the village of Chardeh which guards access to Bamian, controlled by another member of the opposition alliance, Karim Khalili.

"We have already captured 100 Kalashnikovs and (have taken) 50 Dostum soldiers prisoner," said Mulla Gulmarjan, a Pashtoon fighter in the valley's Shinwari district said.

The ultra-orthodox Tale-

ban, which emerged from the Koranic schools of Pakistan just over two years ago, have seized more than two-thirds of the war-torn country, including the capital Kabul which fell to them on Sept. 27.

Fighting between the militia and the opposition forces, which are battling for control of the area north of Kabul, broke out again 12 days ago after a three-month lull.

The latest clashes saw the militia seize control of the crucial towns of Jabul Seraj and Gulbahr, which gave them access to the Salang and Ghorband valleys and put them at the doorstep of Mr. Masood's Panjsher Valley stronghold.

The move prompted the retreating opposition forces to blow up the rocky hill-sides above the Salang Highway — which leads to the Salang Pass, made famous for its battles during the 10-year Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, about 10 refugees fleeing fighting in Afghanistan's northwest provinces die from hunger and cold each day, U.N. sources said Tuesday.

An estimated 50,000 Afghans from northwest Badkhis province have been forced to flee fighting between the Taliban militia and the opposition forces of Gen. Dostum over the past three months, the sources said.

While some had returned to their homes since hostilities escalated in the region last November, the U.N. sources said there were an estimated 24,000 others who had moved to the western Taliban-held city of Herat.

U.K. Conservatives soldier on after surprise defeat

LONDON (R) — Prime Minister John Major's conservative government shrugged off a surprise defeat in parliament Monday night and said it would not change election tactics.

The opposition took advantage of ministers being away at a cabinet brainstorming session at the prime minister's country residence to stage a late-night ambush in the House of Commons on a vote over government education plans.

The government shrugged off the defeat, saying it would try to reinstate the plans — to allow schools which have opted out of local authority control to expand — when the education bill goes to the House of Lords, parliament's upper chamber.

Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell dismissed suggestions that the government was in trouble and risked being unable to hold on to power until Mr. Major's preferred election date of May 1.

"It's the prime minister's job to fix the date, not mine, I'm not going to speculate about that... nobody's limping along," Mr. Dorrell told a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio interview Tuesday.

The government's defeat by 273 votes to 272 on an education bill amendment was not sufficiently serious to prompt a vote of confidence, which could push the government out of power if the Conservatives lost.

But it proved how difficult the main opposition

Labour Party can make it for the government to keep the upper hand in parliament. Recent opinion polls have shown the Conservatives some 20 points behind Labour.

A breakdown in trust between Labour and the Conservatives has led to the end of cross-party arrangements allowing members of parliament detained elsewhere to miss votes without affecting the result, offering Labour plenty of chances for ambushes.

Labour's education spokesman David Blunkett mocked at Mr. Major's chances of survival, saying the government "announces that it is going through to May and can't even get through the evening."

New Austrian chancellor, government sworn in

VIENNA (AFP) — Austria's new Chancellor Viktor Klima was sworn in Tuesday following the resignation earlier this month of his predecessor Franz Vranitzky of the Social Democratic Party (SPOE).

The Austrian press Tuesday hailed Mr. Klima's appointment as well as his choice of ministers.

"With the radical reshuffling of his government Viktor Klima reveals a dynamic and energetic attitude," reported the mass-circulation daily Kronen Zeitung.

Kurier, another mass-circulation daily, judged that Mr. Klima's team is competent to take action... Viktor Klima has the talent that is needed to be chancellor.

The Kronen Zeitung, which compares Mr. Klima without hesitation to U.S. President Bill Clinton, published results of a survey according to which 43 per cent of the population is happy with the new government.

Under Mr. Klima's leadership, the government coalition in place since March 1996, between the dominant SPOE and the smaller conservative People's Party (OEPV) remains intact.

In his first press conference as Chancellor Klima said he intended to pursue cooperation with the OEPV in a "loyal and frank" manner.

He rejected the possibility of a coalition between the SPOE and the far-right Freedom Party of Jörg Haider, which came a close second to the Social Democrats in European elections in December 1995 and is the third biggest party in parliament.

But the Austrian press predicted that Mr. Klima's leadership would herald closer ties between the Social Democrats and Mr. Haider's nationalist party.

Until now Mr. Vranitzky's aversion to Mr. Haider had consistently hampered the rise of the Freedom Party.

Mr. Klima completely renewed the SPOE wing of his coalition when he announced the composition of his new government last week but he will head an unchanged OEPV team.

From the previous SPOE cabinet Mr. Klima has retained only Caspar Eimer, formerly interior minister, whom he has made transport and science minister.



A riot policeman smiles as his colleagues block the way of opposition demonstrators during a protest in the centre of the Yugoslavia capital Monday (Reuters photo)

Algerian trade union leader wounded in attack

ALGIERS (Agencies) — The head of Algeria's powerful UGTA trade union, Abdul Hak Benhamouda, was seriously wounded by gunshots in an attack Tuesday, security services said.

Mr. Benhamouda, leader of the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) and a supporter of President Liamine Zeroual, was admitted to Mustapha Hospital.

His condition was reported as "serious."

The attack took place at May 1 Square, in the heart of Algiers.

Algeria is in the throes of a bloody civil war between the military-backed government and hardline Islamic groups.

Mr. Benhamouda has been one of the main figures in Algeria's political and trade union life.

He actively supported Mr. Zeroual during the presidential election of November 1995.

Recently he announced that he would leave the UGTA this year to set up a political party.

The Arabic-language Al

Alam Essiassi (Political World) newspaper has reported that Mr. Benhamouda had been designated by several organisations within the so-called "revolutionary family" to lead a pro-Zeroual party.

Meanwhile, the Algerian government Tuesday began deploying security forces near two main Muslim guerrilla strongholds in the northern outskirts of Algiers, residents in the Algerian capital said.

The residents, speaking by telephone, said they believed the move might be the start of a huge operation in the area to wipe out Muslim rebels and give substance to President Zeroual's vow last Friday to eradicate "terrorism."

"They started moving equipment near Djebel Koukou, we saw soldiers and Ninja (anti-terrorist crack troops) coming with the material during the night," said a woman living in the area.

Djebel Koukou is a hilltop working-class neighbourhood overlooking the Muslim fundamentalist Bab Al

Oued stronghold in Algiers. At least five bodies of slaughtered civilians were found early this month in Djebel Koukou, which experienced some of Algiers' heaviest battles between guerrillas and security forces last year.

Residents said more security forces were seen near Baine Forest, on the northern edge of Algiers, where many guerrillas were believed holed up, taking advantage of the forest's maze of caves and grottos.

The reports of the deployments coincided with a call by the government-controlled newspaper Al Moudjahid for people to help the authorities fight the guerrillas.

"The state, guarantor of the security of people and property, is called to intensify its action against the violence. We should all be aware of this tragic situation in order to give a push to destiny, putting the Algerian nation above all," said Al Moudjahid.

Mr. Zeroual, a former army general, did not unveil any security measures to quash the guerrilla move-

ment in his Friday speech but said:

"I confirm to the Algerian people the determination of the Algerian state to battle against the terrorist groups until their final eradication."

More than 200 people have been killed since the start on Jan. 10 of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan in massacres and bombings, mostly in Algiers and surrounding towns and hamlets, according to Algerian newspapers.

An Algerian Islamist group calling itself the Faithful of the Sermon said in a statement Monday Algeria's future would be "more bloody and the earth will tremble under the feet of the tyrannical regime."

In the statement sent to an international news agency, the group said it controlled zones in Algeria and that Mr. Zeroual's nationwide speech Friday showed his "regime" was near its end.

It was not possible to check the authenticity of the statement which mixed verses from the Koran, with accusations against the Algerian authorities.

Australian republic push bursts back to life

CANBERRA (R) — The push for Australia to become a republic has burst back to life with renewed calls for a national vote on the issue this year, amid charges that monarchist Prime Minister John Howard is allowing the issue die.

"We feel that the time has come for the government now to march its populist rhetoric to political reality and to have a plebiscite," Malcolm Turnbull, chairman of the Australian Republican Movement, said Tuesday.

Liberal leader Howard, who ousted Republican Labour Prime Minister Paul Keating last March, made an election promise to hold a people's convention and plebiscite on the republic issue in 1997.

But media reports say the government is planning to water down the convention, allowing the national and state governments to elect all delegates, and possibly delay it until 1998.

"If John Howard wants to

be taken seriously as being committed to democracy then the people's convention should be chosen by the people," Mr. Turnbull said at a news conference.

"I'm very concerned that it's become a delaying tactic. It (the government) promised a people's convention in 1997. We are now in 1997 and we don't have the faintest idea what they're intending," Mr. Turnbull said.

But Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer Tuesday denied the government was moving too slowly towards a promised vote on removing Britain's Queen Elizabeth as head-of-state.

"This is a second-order issue as we seek to boost our export effort, as we seek to ensure job creation across the country," Mr. Fischer told reporters.

Mr. Fischer said he was confident the government would set up a people's convention and a plebiscite on the republic issue.

The convention aims to produce options to be voted

on in a national plebiscite, but this vote would not be binding on the government.

To change the Australian constitution to allow a republic, a majority of Australians in a majority of the country's six states must support a referendum favouring a republic.

Mr. Howard's cabinet discussed its republic plans Tuesday at its first meeting for the year and Republicans are watching closely to see whether the government waters down any of its election promises.

"It is disturbing that nearly a year since it was elected, the Howard government is overdue in announcing its programme," New South Wales opposition leader Peter Collins said Monday.

"The perception is growing, I trust wrongly, that the federal government is renege-

half of Australians want a republic but also that they think the country faces more pressing problems. Many are uncommitted."

Mr. Keating began his republican push shortly after he became prime minister in 1992 and the country became focussed on the issue for a few years.

Mr. Keating hoped to replace Queen Elizabeth with an Australian president either before the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 or on Jan. 1, 2001, the centenary of Australia's federation from six British colonies.

During the past 12 months the republic issue faded from the political arena. But the 1997 Australian of the year, Peter Doherty, rekindled the debate on Australia Day, Jan. 26, when he called for a republic.

"I don't see any reason for maintaining a situation in which the head of state of Australia is the queen of England," said Mr. Doherty, a medical researcher who jointly won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1996.

Burma announces jailing of 14 for role in unrest

RANGOON (AFP) — Burma's military junta said Tuesday that 14 people, including five members of Aung San Suu Kyi's main opposition party, have been jailed for seven years for their part in last month's student protests.

Burmese military intelligence said in two statements that the 14 were sentenced under the Emergency Act of 1950 after being "found guilty of agitation and throwing rocks at security personnel during the student unrest last December."

Mrs. Suu Kyi, reached by telephone from Bangkok, said the sentences were a sham since the trials were not made public and the accused had been denied access to proper counsel.

"I don't for a moment believe that they were found guilty since they were obviously tried in camera," she said. "The fact that they were tried in camera... indicates that they were not guilty."

One of the statements, which did not name those jailed, said the sentences had been carried out on Jan. 27 at the court in Insein township, the Rangoon suburb where the country's most notorious prison is located.

The statements said that five of the 14 were members of Mrs. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) and none were students.

Mrs. Suu Kyi said the NLD had not been informed about the sentences and

was unaware the trial had taken place. "They don't tell us or the families anything," she said.

"If the evidence against them was strong, there would be all the more reason that they should be tried in public," she added.

The opposition leader has frequently criticised the summary trials carried out by the Burmese military and its failure to inform families of trials and judgements — as well as allow for independent defence lawyers.

Trials for violations of the country's draconian public security laws — as is the case for many criminal cases — are held in secret and the accused are forced to accept counsel provided by the state.

Mr. Suu Kyi said she doubted that none of the 14 were students since a large number had been picked up following the unrest in December. She added that the NLD's first step would be to find out the names of those sentenced.

Tuesday's announcement came just 10 days after 20 people — including 14 NLD members — were handed seven-year sentences for taking part in the wave of student protests which brought a security clampdown in Rangoon.

Mrs. Suu Kyi said the party had only managed to identify one of the 20 people whose sentences were announced on Jan. 18 — an NLD youth who worked in the garden of her lakeside compound who was sentenced to seven years.

KINSHASA (AFP) — Zaire's army has announced that it has captured a large number of rebels in the eastern part of the country. The army said it had killed about 100 rebels and captured about 500 others. The rebels were part of a group called the "Front for the Liberation of the Congo" (FLC). The army said it had captured them in a battle near the town of Kisumu. The rebels had been active in the area for several months, attacking government forces and civilians. The army said it had captured the rebels in a surprise attack. The rebels had been hiding in the area for some time. The army said it had captured them in a battle near the town of Kisumu. The rebels had been active in the area for several months, attacking government forces and civilians. The army said it had captured the rebels in a surprise attack. The rebels had been hiding in the area for some time.

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Protesters during a protest in the town of Walikale.

Zairean army counteroffensive stalls

KISANGANI, Zaire (Agencies) — The Zairean army's promised massive counter-offensive against rebels in eastern Zaire appears to have stalled in recent days, several sources in this town on the eastern border said Tuesday.

They said the rebels, who control a large swathe of eastern Zaire, have maintained their positions along a front 300 kilometres east of Kisangani and about 100 kilometres west of the town of Walikale.

It was impossible to independently verify the reports and the government has made no official statements. Clashes have flared chiefly near the town of Walikale, 150 kilometres west of Gombe, where both sides are engaged in a front which has been bogged for two weeks.

Local sources said the slowdown in the government's counteroffensive was linked to problems in resupplying troops with weapons and ammunition. They said no ground corridor had been set up to resupply the troops and the only form of transport available was by air, which was insufficient.

Observers said that with the end of January approaching, another potential flashpoint for the government was the soldiers' salaries.

The soldiers, who earn an average of one dollar a

month, have not been paid in months and have already staged two rebellions in the capital Kinshasa. Recent government budget cuts may also fuel discontent within the army, sources here said.

Meanwhile, Rwanda's military strongman said Tuesday he was concerned at the government counteroffensive in eastern Zaire and hoped the campaign would not spill over into Rwanda.

Vice-President and Defence Minister Paul Kagame however said Zairean rebels current appeared to be winning in fighting with Zairean troops backed by foreign mercenaries in the east.

"We are taking seriously the possibility of a counter-offensive by the Zaireans and of course we want to keep this outside Rwanda," Gen. Kagame, Rwanda's former Tutsi rebel leader, told reporters at Kigali Airport.

"But at the moment it appears this is a fight the rebels are winning and the Zaireans seem to be more talk than action on the ground as events are showing," he added.

Gen. Kagame was speaking at departure ceremonies for Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, who ended a 24-hour visit to Rwanda where he discussed security issues with the country's leaders.

Zairean rebel leader Laurent Kabila denied Monday a Zairean government announcement that its troops last week recaptured the town of Walikale, 120 kilometres from rebel headquarters in the city of Gombe, and had killed 100 rebels.

Mr. Kabila told the British Broadcasting Corporation that the rebels had so far had no trouble from the counteroffensive announced by Kinshasa. He said foreign mercenaries had stopped fighting and resumed training after two were killed by rebels.

He denied Walikale had fallen and dismissed the government report of its capture as propaganda to fool the Zairean people.

Mr. Kabila said the government campaign would fail to wrest a swath of eastern Zaire from the rebels because the Zairean army was ineffective and mercenaries wanted to live to spend their salaries.

Witnesses said the shrouded body of a white mercenary killed fighting rebels arrived by helicopter over the weekend in the city of Kisangani, the headquarters for the counteroffensive.

Up to 300 soldiers of fortune, many Serbs from the former Yugoslavia, are in eastern Zaire to help the campaign to regain control over the east ordered by President Mobutu Sese Seko.

CIA taught torture methods in training manual

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) taught torture techniques in the early 1980s, including ways to break a prisoner's will through sensory deprivation and inducing strong fear, a newly declassified CIA training manual showed.

The guide, Human Resources Exploitation Training Manual — 1983, appears to have been designed for training security forces allied with Washington's anti-Communist crusade in Central America under former President Ronald Reagan.

The CIA said Monday that a policy strongly opposing the use of torture had been written into updates of the training manual between 1984 and early 1985.

A cover sheet inserted by 1985 cautioned students: "The use of force, mental torture, threats, insults or exposure to inhumane treatment of any kind as an aid to interrogation is prohibited by law, both international and domestic. It is neither authorized nor condoned."

"We respect and are committed to internationally recognized human rights standards," Mark Mansfield, a CIA spokesman, said on Monday. "We do not engage in activities that could be construed as support for, encouragement of, or complicity in human rights violations."

"Adherence to human rights principles is not only emphasised in our training but it is intrinsic to all of our activities," added the CIA spokesman, who was long involved in training pro-U.S. security forces abroad.

Maskhadov on course for Chechen election victory

GROZNY (R) — Aslan Maskhadov, who forced Russian troops out of Chechnya with a combination of guerrilla warfare and shrewd diplomacy, appeared headed Tuesday for a clear victory in presidential elections.

At Mr. Maskhadov's headquarters in the Chechen capital, Grozny, guerrillas in camouflage uniforms with rifles slung over their shoulders hugged each other as women laughed and celebrated.

"Preliminary figures allow us to say that Aslan Maskhadov has become president of Chechnya," said Mr. Maskhadov's closest aide and spokesman Maybek Vachagayev as he raised a clenched fist in the air in a victory gesture following Monday's poll.

The claim, if confirmed by official results, might offer some comfort in Moscow after a disastrous military campaign.

Although he has vowed to confront the Kremlin over the delicate issue of the mainly Muslim region's sovereignty.

As the man who inflicted humiliating defeats on the Russian army he is surely no friend of the Kremlin. But among 13 candidates in Monday's poll, the quietly spoken former Soviet army colonel is the man Russian leaders have learned to deal with at the negotiating table.

Mr. Vachagayev said early

results showed Mr. Maskhadov had captured about 58 per cent against 30 per cent for chief rival Shamil Basayev. If no candidate wins 50 per cent in the first round, a second ballot will be held between the two top candidates.

Mr. Maskhadov negotiated a peace deal with Moscow last year, providing for complete withdrawal of Russian troops after a two-year war that resulted in tens of thousands of dead and widespread destruction in Chechnya.

About a kilometre away from Mr. Maskhadov's headquarters, near the Minutka traffic roundabout that was long a focus of fighting, the mood in rival Basayev's camp was sombre.

A Basayev victory would be a further bitter blow for the Kremlin which sees him without reservation as a terrorist.

Commander Basayev led a raid on the south Russian town of Budennovsk in 1995, taking some 1,000 hostages. About 100 people died in the action, which revived a flagging guerrilla campaign.

All leading candidates say they would press quickly for sovereignty, despite a provision in the peace deal deferring the issue for five years. Mr. Maskhadov demands "war reparations" to rebuild an economy based on the oil industry.

A Russian deputy foreign

minister, underlining Kremlin sensitivity on the sovereignty issue, said at the weekend that Moscow was ready to break off relations with any country that moved to grant Chechnya diplomatic recognition.

Another leading Maskhadov rival, Movladi Udugov, virtually acknowledged defeat.

"It's time to finish with the dividing up of power and get down to work," he said, in a clear indication he would be willing to cooperate with Mr. Maskhadov to prevent any future internal conflict. Mr. Maskhadov seemed in the sure of victory.

The present acting President Zemlikhan Yandarbiyev said he would not work with Mr. Maskhadov. "There is no precedent in history for an outgoing president in work with the new one," he told the Moscow radio station Ekho Moskvy.

Electoral Commission chairman Munadi Saydaiyev told Russian Television Mr. Maskhadov had more than 60 per cent by early morning. A preliminary result may be available inwards evening, he said.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin, recovering from pneumonia, called a meeting of his top-level consultative council to discuss the results of the poll Tuesday.

Outside observers have said they were impressed by the smoothness of the voting and an absence of major violations.

There were no reports of violence in a land awash with arms.

Mr. Yeltsin admits sending troops to crush the Chechen rebels in 1994 ranks as one of the biggest mistakes of his presidency. It could yet be one that haunts him well into a second term already overshadowed by illness.

Chechens in their devastated capital Grozny voiced mixed emotions about the prospect of Mr. Maskhadov as their leader.

"I think that today Mr. Maskhadov is the best man to stabilise the situation in Chechnya," said one young voter.

"Now they (Russia) will have to recognise us, we're people too, like Portugal, Holland, we're not monkeys," said another. "With Maskhadov as president everything will be OK."

But another armed man sporting the black beard of a guerrilla, feared Mr. Maskhadov would be "too soft" on Moscow.

"He may be a soldier, but he's weak," he said. "The people who voted for Mr. Maskhadov are opposed to independence."

Mr. Maskhadov's task will be far from simple.

Chechnya has won de facto independence with the withdrawal of Russian troops. But with its back to the towering Caucasus Mountains, it is hemmed in by Russian territory and is all but bankrupt.

S. Korean police raids Hanbo HQ

SEOUL (R) — South Korean police raided offices of the founding Hanbo group, and top bankers were barred from travelling in a loan scandal that has rocked President Kim Young Sam's government in an election year.

Mr. Kim cancelled a trip to Europe to focus on the biggest financial crisis of his term.

Share prices dived despite a desperate government bid to rescue the market, and the central bank continued to pump money into the banking system to prevent a credit crunch.

Hanbo's flagship, Hanbo Steel Co, sought court protection after piling up debts of \$5.8 billion to build a new steel mill that many analysts regard as a white elephant. A second unit of South Korea's 14th largest conglomerate also applied for court protection from creditors.

Meanwhile, the tycoon at the centre of the scandal, Hanbo founder Chung Tae-Soo, who helped bankroll the corrupt administration of former President Roh Tae-Woo, was rushed to hospital after complaining of high blood pressure.

Mr. Kim ordered a probe into loans to Hanbo after opposition allegations of government influence-peddling.

Police raided the homes of Mr. Chung and his four sons together with offices of Hanbo Steel and 15 affiliates. "Search warrants were issued to seize evidence for any financial irregularities," Prosecutor Lee Chung-Soo said.

The Justice Ministry slapped overseas travel bans on heads of Hanbo Steel's major creditor banks.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation

Established 1975

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Bridging the gap

REPORTS THAT Syria and Israel are searching for a common ground to re-launch peace talks between them after a hiatus of almost a year is good news. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has until recently rejected resuming negotiations with Damascus from where former Labour prime ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres had left off. Syrian President Hafez Assad, on the other hand, officially declared that the Syrian track must proceed on the basis of what the former Israeli government had agreed to, a clear commitment that in return for full peace the Jewish state would ultimately withdraw from the entire Golan Heights and to the June 4, 1967 lines.

The two sides have got bogged down over the basis on which their talks could be reactivated from their current dormant state. Now there is increasingly talk about a compromise between the two being worked out with the help of the Americans. Mr. Netanyahu was quoted in the Israeli press as saying that efforts are being made to reach "a bridging formula" which will enable a resumption of the talks. According to other news reports, the U.S., although not recognising the Labour commitment for withdrawal, seems to be seeking to obtain pledges from both parties that their talks would aim at full peace based on U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the land-for-peace formula.

Still, even this seemingly benign formula is troublesome because it would technically take the two parties back to the Madrid conference stage. Going back that far would necessarily equal returning to square one. It would also mean that all the painstaking talks between the two countries since the preliminary phase of the Madrid conference was initiated in 1991 would be deemed as non-existent. In real terms it would be hard for both Israel and Syria to ignore all their past negotiations as if nothing had happened.

Prime Minister Netanyahu would like to satisfy his constituency at this stage by repeating his hardline stance on the Heights, hence his insistence that negotiations could resume but "without prior conditions." The Likud-led government's performance on Hebron, however, demonstrates that he can be as practical and pragmatic in real situations as he can be doctrinaire and abstract in public. We have no doubt that neither Damascus nor the U.S. would want to go back to the situation that existed six years ago had they not received assurances from Israel that past achievements are not buried and done with. That's why we believe that the Syrian-Israeli peace talks will begin again soon but neither from the point where they began in Madrid nor from point where they reached with Labour, but somewhere in between. Under the circumstances, this would be good enough to breathe new life into the Syria-Israeli front.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IT SEEMS that the region is unable to maintain stability for long, said the Al Ra'i editorial, even in light of the recent peace treaties. Palestine and Jordan signed with Israel. It seems that North Africa's turn has come to face problems, it continued, with violence in Algeria getting worse and no solution to the threat to the lives of women, children and innocent civilians in sight. Hostility has become a way of living for the Sudanese as well, the editorial said, adding that the reason behind violence in these countries is the same. Sudan claims that it is trying to preserve its Islamic identity and the Algerian activists state that they too are defending Islam. It seems that the world powers are behind the violence and terrorism in the two North African countries, as they have a strategic interest in keeping the Arab World in a perpetual state of chaos.

HISTORY REPEATS itself, states the Al Dustour editorial Tuesday. The situation in Sudan and Algeria is reminiscent of that of Iraq, six years ago, it adds, saying that the same bitter feelings and minor miscalculations that were behind the Iraqi adversity six years ago seem to be prevailing in the current state of affairs in Sudan and Algeria today. The Arab capitals are again at odds and no one seems to have learnt the lesson of history. Therefore, the editorial urges the Arab Nations to stand together and help Sudan, in its moment of plight, to reunite, so as not to become another "Iraq", and to preserve whatever shred of humanity and honour it has left.

The EU and Israel's human rights responsibilities

By Abdullah Mutawi

In search of minimum standards

AS 1996 drew to an end, a new chapter of European-Israeli relations came closer to inception with the anticipated ratification of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. There is a real risk, however, that a speedy and unqualified ratification of the agreement by EU member states would condone Israel's current practice and standard of respect for human rights as an acceptable benchmark to be applied to the EU's relations with Israel.

An integral element of all EU internal and external relations is that they are explicitly conditioned on respect for human rights, in accordance with accepted obligations under international law. The EU-Israel Association Agreement is no exception to this rule, with Article 2 defining "respect for human rights and democratic principles" as being "an essential element" of relations between the EU and Israel.

The agreement, initiated in Brussels by EU and Israeli representatives in September, comes at the beginning of an ambitious project labelled the EU-Mediterranean Partnership. The stated objectives of the partnership, which envisages the relaxation of trade barriers between participating states and the Union, combine economic cooperation and close political dialogue to promote political stability among the partner countries.

The agreement is subject to a dual ratification procedure whereby the legislature of each member state must ratify the agreement following separate approval by the European Parliament. The reason for this is that areas of cooperation under the agreement fall, in some cases, under the competence of the Union and in other cases under the competence of individual member states. The European Parliament ratified the EU-Israel agreement last February and ratification by national legislatures is now under way.

Ratification of agreements like this is usually a matter of routine procedure in the national parliaments of EU member states, and it can be difficult to find out what stage such an agreement has reached or exactly when it might be tabled for ratification. This can be a source of much frustration for those who fear that a routine ratification of the agreement, at a time when Israel's government is openly pursuing policies in gross violation of international law, will signal the inadvertent acquiescence of the EU states and their parliaments to these policies.

The EU-Israel Association Agreement has been linked to the peace process by the European Council in its Luxembourg Declaration last October. The declaration was widely seen as a warning to Netanyahu, whose recalcitrance provokes foreboding at the EU, which negotiated the deal with his predecessors. It remains to be seen whether EU states will take up the challenge and secure Israel's compliance with the minimum standards of respect for human rights which they would expect as a starting point in their discussions with any potential Mediterranean partner. The behaviour of certain member states over the past year would suggest that this is unlikely. The EU has made numerous attempts in recent months to establish itself as a protagonist in the peace process and has been exasperated in its battle not to be sidelined by the U.S. Increasing accessibility to aid and the relaxation of trade barriers is the EU's most obvious trump card in this context and the EU-Mediterranean Partnership fits in well with the EU's attempt to secure a position of influence in the changing shape of the Middle East.

On the other hand, the EU has also long recognised and condemned Israel's failure to respect Palestinian rights in clear breach of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 as an occupying power and a party to that convention. Israel is currently engaged in the systematic impoverishment through exclusion of Palestinian labourers from occupied Jerusalem as well as extended area closures and illegal land expropriation and obstruction of Palestinian internal and external trade. These practices, in addition to the illegal expansion of settlements in the occupied territories and officially sanctioned and institutionalised torture, are all illustrations cited by the Ramallah-based Centre for International Human Rights Enforcement (CIHRE) of Israel's shameful disregard for its international obligations.

"For a while," argues Lynn Welchman of CIHRE, "we have been in a situation where raising Israel's human rights abuses and violations of international law is seen — particularly but not only by the U.S. — as somehow 'disruptive' of the peace process." The Washington-based Human Rights Watch/Middle East in their World Report 1997 refers to the "public silence" maintained by the U.S. administration in the

face of human rights violations by Israel. "And yet," argues Dr. Welchman, "it is the systematic violation of international treaty law resulting in abuses of Palestinian human rights, both as individuals and as a people, that has rendered the peace process so extremely 'vulnerable'." Indeed, CIHRE is not the first human rights organisation to point out that even if the Oslo accords were implemented to the letter, they would still leave extensive control and discretion over vital matters affecting the personal and economic security of the Palestinian population entirely in Israel's hands, with no guarantee of their rights.

Economic collapse in the territories

It is in this context that human rights groups and other NGOs across Europe are urging their national legislatures to exercise extreme caution and measured consideration before ratifying the agreement. It is actually remarkable that the EU is considering an agreement of such benefit to the Israeli economy when the Israeli repression of the Palestinian economy is causing European development assistance to be effectively redeployed to offset the resulting economic collapse. Over the last two years, the losses sustained by the Palestinian economy are said to have amounted to more than double the total value of all donor assistance.

In addition to the loss of over 100,000 jobs since the exclusion of Palestinian labourers from Israel, the Israeli government has imposed fifteen "internal closures," totalling 109 days, accompanied by severe restrictions on internal movement and a total cut-off of Palestinian access to Israeli-controlled air and sea ports. This has paralysed Palestinian internal and external trade and while these policies are imposed under the guise of "security," Israel is allowing for the undisturbed movement of its own goods and goods produced by Palestinian firms under contract to Israeli enterprises. According to CIHRE, this has cost the Palestinian economy an estimated \$4.5m per day of closure. Palestinian agricultural produce is "priced out of the market" by being subjected to delays of up to 15 days, damaging manual "security" inspections and significant added costs. In keeping with its tradition of effrontery, Israel has even protested against the EU's negotiations with the PLO, meant to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian-EU free

trade agreement, on the grounds that the Oslo accords place Palestinian external economic relations under Israel's final control.

Torture

The exasperation of the Palestinian population has reached critical levels in the face of such measures and these are compounded by the continuing mistreatment and abuse perpetrated by the Israeli government. Unlawful imprisonment in Israel and the torture of detainees continue, in violation of the Geneva Convention, the Convention against Torture, and the international covenants. Moreover, Israel's government and judiciary have recently taken the unprecedented step of formally sanctioning higher levels of "physical pressure" against Palestinian detainees.

"It is actually remarkable that the EU is considering an agreement of such benefit to the Israeli economy when the Israeli repression of the Palestinian economy is causing European development assistance to be effectively redeployed to offset the resulting economic collapse."

Scant regard has been paid by the international community to what Amnesty International has described as "the judicial authorisation of torture." "Violent shaking" is only one — and by no means the barbed — of the measures included in the "exceptional dispensation" granted to the Israeli security service in October 1994 after a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. In its most recent Urgent Action on the fear of torture of a Palestinian detainee in Israeli custody, Amnesty International asks nationals of EU countries to "seek assurances from your foreign ministries that, in the context of the debate on the Association Agreement, they will ask the Israeli government to review its poli-

cies and practices in order to fulfill its obligations under international law."

The new Israeli government has escalated land confiscation and the establishment and expansion of illegal settlements in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and has begun major new construction on 3,000 settlers' households in the West Bank in the last four months alone. A spokesman for Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon said that in the long term Israel planned to build two new Jewish cities in the occupied territories which it hoped would increase the settler population by up to 100,000 from the current number of around 145,000 (excluding East Jerusalem).

Inherent in the arguments presented by organisations such as CIHRE is the premise that, even preceding ratification of the EU agreement, Israel is already violating not only its undertakings under international humanitarian law, but also its existing trade obligations to the EU. Undertakings made by Israel to the European Commission in 1987 with regard to Palestinian exports to the EU have been systematically flouted in clear contravention of the social and economic rights of the Palestinians. A representative of a prestigious British development agency told a meeting at Westminster that the difficulty of implementing aid programmes on the ground is worse than ever.

There can be no doubt that there is a real conflict between the government of Israel making the human rights declaration in Article 2 of its Association Agreement with the EU, and its conduct on the ground. Ratification of the agreement by EU member states must be seen in the context where violation of international law continues as a matter of Israeli government policy.

In order to maintain some credibility for the prospects of the peace process it is crucial that the European Union uses what leverage it can muster at this critical stage to put in place some firm, law-based rules for Israeli conduct in the interim. The EU itself must recognise that Israel's persistent violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 is also a violation of its treaty obligations to the member states and remains the responsibility of the member states to correct.

Abdullah Mutawi is a London-based lawyer who works with the Centre for Economic and Social Rights. The above article is reprinted from the Middle East International.

LETTERS

Thank you for a nice stay

To the Editor:

HAVING BEEN three weeks in Jordan to qualify for running Airbus 310, using the Royal Jordanian simulator facilities, I would like to thank, through the Jordan Times, that I would read daily during my stay, all Jordanians for making my sojourn so wonderful.

I found the people very kind and always helpful. My badly misinformed opinion changed completely and I will make sure that everybody I meet knows about your beautiful people and country.

Rais Borges,
Airline pilot,
TAP Air,
Portugal.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

IT OCCURRED TO ME

The loss motive

By Ali Kassay

"OUR PRICES are absolutely non-negotiable. I swear to you solemnly that I am selling you this article at a loss, but I need the money. If this sort of thing goes on my business will be ruined and my children will starve. They will have to stand on street corners and beg. However, that is all right. Since you are such a nice guy I shall let you have it for two dinars less than the rock-bottom, non-negotiable price."

It is virtually impossible to do any shopping in Jordan without hearing these utterances, or some variation on the theme. Whether you are buying a house or a handkerchief, there is a ritual that you have to go through when negotiating the price.

It starts with the salesman giving you solemn assurances that he is selling at the lowest price possible. He will swear on the soul of his mother, the divorce of his wife, his sight and the life of his children, (noticeably enough, he omits from this array of cherished people and items an oath on the efficiency of the motor of his luxury car) that if he were to sell the article for a penny less he would be making a loss that would certainly be his ruin. Then he will reduce the price "only for you."

Ironically, no one believes him. He knows that no one believes him, yet he would go through the ritual all the same. Moreover, the buyer, though fully aware that he is being fed a pack of untruths, insists on hearing them. If the seller were to miss out on one of the oaths, the purchaser would be so disappointed by the inefficiency and lack of tact of the salesman, that he may refuse to buy. "He did not reduce the price for me even by a penny," is a frequently heard complaint.

Now the buyer is fully aware that the vendor will have marked the price up by a few dinars, expressly for the purpose of reducing it again by the total or a part of this increment. He is also aware that the reduction is probably less than the total mark-up, which means that he is worse off for the process on which he insists.

One could always imagine that this is no more than habit, or social conditioning, if you want. People are so used to uttering and bearing certain formulae that they would go through them for the sake of it. Not to say they would be lacking in social graces. Almost like the proverbial English penchant for talking about the weather as a substitute for conversation, Jordanians have a functional equivalent in the course of a social visit, sometimes to the exclusion of any other topic of conversation.

But one wonders if this explanation is sufficient to explain the sales ritual, since it influences people's procurement behaviour. Could it be indicative of a deeper state of mind? It may be true that when Jordanians set out to buy goods or services or to enter into any form of transaction, they are not content with acquiring the desired article at a reasonable price; they feel the need to ensure that the other party to the transaction makes a loss as a result.

Netanyahu position Israeli digs

GAZA, JANUARY 29 — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted on Tuesday as saying that he would not allow a permanent Israeli presence in Jerusalem, even if it meant staying in the West Bank and Gaza.

Netanyahu was speaking at a press conference in Jerusalem after meeting with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker. He said that he would not allow a permanent Israeli presence in Jerusalem, even if it meant staying in the West Bank and Gaza.

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Tunnels threaten

TWO TUNNELS dug by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank threaten the collapse of Jerusalem's municipal services, officials said Tuesday.

The tunnels have been excavated along the main water supply line, officials said.

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IT OCCURRED TO ME ...
The loss motive

By Ali Kassar

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It is virtually impossible to do any shopping in Jordan without these intermediaries or what is called the "middlemen". Whether you are buying a house or a handkerchief, there is a middleman who has to go through the negotiating the price.

It starts with the salesman giving you some assurance that he is working at the lowest possible price. He will tell you on the spot that he has made the difference of his own sight and the life of his children. He will tell you that he is not a middleman, but a person who is helping you to get the best price for your money.

Now, the buyer is aware that the middleman will be in a position to give up the few dollars expected in the price of the item. The middleman is aware that the buyer is not a middleman, but a person who is helping you to get the best price for your money.

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Netanyahu to affirm hardline position on Jerusalem to Pope

Israeli digs said to threaten Al Aqsa Mosque

ROME (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted on Tuesday as saying he will tell Pope John Paul at their first meeting next week that his position on a united Jerusalem was firm.

"Jerusalem has to stay united. We are ready to give guarantees to Christians and Muslims but we do not intend to discuss the city's political sovereignty," Rome's Il Messaggero quoted him as saying in an interview in Jerusalem.

Mr. Netanyahu, who took office in May, visits Rome next week and is scheduled to be received by the Pope on Monday.

The prime minister told Il Messaggero that he will not shy away from discussing Jerusalem.

"I will describe to the Pope our peace plan. I will listen to his opinions and ideas. I also would like to describe to him my plans for Jerusalem and remind him that the only period in the last 2,000 years in which the holy places were accessible to all was that from 1967 to today," he was quoted as saying.

The Vatican wants international guarantees protecting the Holy City as sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Must states including the Vatican do not recognise Israel's 1980 claim to Jerusalem as its "united and eternal capital" and keep their embassies in or near Tel Aviv.

The Vatican and Israel established full diplomatic ties two years ago, ending centuries of often hostile Catholic-Jewish relations.

Mr. Netanyahu is also expected to discuss the possibility of a papal trip to the Holy Land.

The Pope and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat discussed the Middle East peace process at the Vatican last month.

Tunnels threaten Aqsa

Two tunnels dug by Israeli archeologists threaten to cause the collapse of Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque, Palestinian officials said Tuesday.

"Two tunnels have been excavated near the southeast edge of the mosque compound and could lead to the collapse of the mosque if they continue," Rad Salah, mayor of the Israeli-Arab town of Um Al Fahm, told journalists.

One of the tunnels, several metres in length, ends at a recently-built brick wall six metres below the Marwani Mosque, an underground prayer area under Al Aqsa, he said.

"Israeli authorities should know that Al Aqsa belongs to the world's one billion Muslims and any harm to this holy site will provoke an explosion of anger," warned Mr. Salah, also a member of the Islamic Movement in Israel.

Mr. Salah and Najeh Bkeirat, head of the Committee for the Preservation of Al Aqsa Heritage, showed photos of the tunnels at a press conference near the mosque esplanade.

"We discovered these tunnels by accident two weeks ago while walking around Al Aqsa esplanade," Mr. Bkeirat said.

Both officials called for an end to the digs and the setting up of a committee of inquiry with Muslim representatives.

The director of Al Aqsa Mosque, Sheikh Mahsen Hussein, also accused Israeli authorities on Sunday of digging tunnels near the mosque.

But the head of excavations at Israel's antiquities authority, Amir Drori, denied the charges. "Allegations of tunnel building are completely baseless," he said.

"Digging did take place nearby to reveal a subterranean system of water canals, part of which pass the mosque compound," Mr. Drori acknowledged.

"Part of these canals were excavated in the 1970s but the dig was stopped and we have no intention of resuming them," he said.

Violent clashes broke out last September when Palestinians protested the opening by Israel of an archaeological tunnel running alongside the mosque compound.

In the worst bloodshed in 30 years, more than 80 people died.

The Palestinians accused the Netanyahu government of seeking to damage the mosque compound, while Mr. Netanyahu insisted the tunnel was merely part of a tourist site.

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Assad said grooming successor

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad may be cleaning up family matters to pave the way for his eldest surviving son to succeed him, the New York Times said Tuesday.

Quoting diplomats and prominent Syrians, the daily said there were signs that Mr. Assad was stifling any ambitions for power his brothers and nephews may have and grooming his son Bashar Al Assad, 31, to eventually take the helm.

The sources said Mr. Assad's 64-year-old brother Jamil, departed abruptly for Paris late last month not for medical treatment, as officials explained, but on the president's orders after his mafia-style business dealings in Syria's two main ports became an embarrassment.

On the other hand, Mr. Assad's younger brother, Rifaat, 59, has been put under heavy internal surveillance on suspicion he is trying to renew his ties with the upper echelons of the Syrian military. This comes five years after he was allowed back from exile in Paris following his attempt to overthrow his brother in 1983.

A restaurant owned by one of Rifaat Assad's sons was shut down in November as part of an investigation into corruption: the first among the relatives of top Syrian officials whose business activities have been unceremoniously reined in, the source said.

"The president has had it with his brothers and their sons, and he's trying to do something about it," a prominent Syrian told the daily in the front-page article.

At the same time, Bashar Al Assad is appearing in posters along with his father and late brother Basil — killed in a 1994 automobile accident, and is being hailed as "our

Assad appears in public for first time since Jan. 6

PRESIDENT HAFEZ AL Assad Tuesday made his first public appearance since undergoing surgery for a prostate problem on Jan. 6. Mr. Assad Tuesday received Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa. They briefed the Syrian leader on their visit to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Mr. Khaddam and Mr. Sharaa returned home Monday, but resumed their Gulf mission after briefing the president. They flew to the United Arab Emirates late Tuesday.

bope" for Syria's future.

Hafez Al Assad, 66, who has a history of heart trouble and diabetes, is recovering from prostate surgery.

"Things feel very fragile," one diplomat told the daily. However, the sources point out that since the Syrian constitution requires that a president be at least 40, Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam remains, for the short-term, Mr. Assad's most likely successor.

Those who have tried to detect a pattern in all the Assad family shuffles believe the president has someone else in mind for his succession.

"Hafez Assad clearly wants to be succeeded by his son," a Damascus-based diplomat said. "And if you ask me whether all this is about securing the future or polishing the present, I would say that it is probably both."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Saudis report 2,120 kidney transplants

RIYADH (AFP) — Surgeons in Saudi Arabia have conducted 2,120 kidney transplants since it became one of the first Arab countries to approve the procedure 17 years ago, officials said Tuesday. "Transplants of kidneys from living persons succeed 96.5 per cent of the time, while transplants from persons determined to be brain dead or deep coma have an 83 per cent success rate," Abdullah Al Khedr, president for the national committee for kidney transplants, told the official Saudi Press Agency.

Turk parliament rejects Ciller probe

ANKARA (R) — The Turkish Parliament on Tuesday decided against setting up a new inquiry into Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller that could have sent her to the supreme court on corruption charges. Deputy Speaker Yasin Hasipoglu said deputies voted 247 to 242 to reject an opposition proposal to probe allegations that Mrs. Ciller was involved in corruption at the state-owned Turban hotel and tourism company.

Thieves beat up Sadat caretaker

CAIRO (AFP) — Thieves broke into the summer home of former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's son at dawn on Tuesday, beat up the caretaker and stole telephones, blankets and a gas canister, police said. Police denied an earlier report by the Egyptian news agency MENA which had said that Gamal Anwar Al Sadat was beaten up by the thieves and said he was not home at the time of the burglary. The incident took place at dawn at Sadat's summer home in the residential Agami suburb of the northern Mediterranean city of Alexandria. Three thieves broke into the house through the front door, threatened caretaker Morsi Ali Hassaballah, 26, with knives and beat him up before fleeing, police said. Three accomplices were waiting outside the villa in a van, witnesses told police.

Israeli jailed for diamond smuggling

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — A South African court has sentenced an Israeli citizen to five years' imprisonment or a 250,000-rand (\$34,350) fine for unlawful possession of diamonds, police said Tuesday. Police spokesman Jan

Combrink said Ziv Volk, 32, pleaded guilty at the nearby

Kempton Park regional court Monday to charges of illegally possessing more than two million rand (\$434,800) worth of unpolished diamonds. Captain Combrink said police, acting on a tip-off, arrested the man Saturday night at the Johannesburg international airport and X-rays revealed that he had hidden the stones, weighing 782 carats, in his rectum. They said Volk, who was acting as a courier for unidentified dealers, had arrived in South Africa Friday and was scheduled to leave for Tel Aviv the following night.

Egypt foils antiquity smuggling

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian authorities have foiled attempts to smuggle priceless archaeological objects across the border with Israel, the government daily Al Ahran reported Tuesday. The authorities arrested three people, including a Palestinian man, at the Rafah border post northeast of Cairo, and seized more than 200 objects dating back to the Pharaonic, Roman and Ottoman periods, it said. Palestinian Omar Hassan Mubammad and the sister of two merchants based in Gaza were arrested when they tried to smuggle across Rafah 145 objects including statues, bowls and bronze and silver engravings. These objects dating to the Pharaonic and Roman periods were concealed in secret compartments in their luggage. Al Ahran said. Another woman was arrested when she tried to smuggle 60 ancient coins from the Roman and Ottoman periods, it added. State prosecutors are currently investigating the case against the suspects, Al Ahran said, without giving details of when the arrests were made.

Iranian banishes wife for delivering girl

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian man has refused to admit his wife back to their house after learning that she gave birth to a sixth daughter in hospital, a newspaper reported Tuesday. The man made good on threats he made before her delivery that he would not allow her to come back if the baby happened to be a girl, said the woman, identified by her first name Firuzeh. She told a court in the northeastern city of Mashhad where she filed a suit against her husband for breaking their marriage vow that he had refused to visit her at the hospital after learning about the newborn's sex. "My father had to pay the hospital bills and after being released I went straight to my father's house," she said, quoted by Qods newspaper.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, on Tuesday inspects a guard of honour mounted on the occasion of a brief visit to Jordan by the Palestinian leader (photo by Yusef Allam)

Jordan, PNA agree to give new push to economic ties

(Continued from page 1)

the Palestinian territories.

On Jan. 15, Israel and the Palestinians signed an agreement that paved the way for an Israeli handover of the 80 per cent of the West Bank town of Hebron to the PNA.

It also envisages an Israeli troop withdrawal from rural areas of the West Bank in three phases, ending by August 1998.

King Hussein played a key role in mediating the Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

Crown Prince Hassan told reporters after Tuesday's

talks that he hoped that Jordan and the PNA would reactivate their bilateral agreements.

He emphasised that priority should be given to the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people, noting that free trade between Jordan and the Palestinian territories could flourish and investments could be expected in a climate of stability and security.

President Arafat thanked King Hussein for his help in concluding the Hebron accord.

The audience was addressed on the Jordanian side by Prime Minister Kabarti.

Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, Director of the National Security Council HRH Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Majali, Minister of Trade and Industry Ali Abul Ragheb, Minister of Information Marwan Muasher, Minister of Administrative Development Kamal Nasser and head of the Jordanian representation office in Gaza Ziad Majali.

The meeting was attended on the Palestinian side by President Arafat's adviser Mahmoud Abbas and other Palestinian officials.

President Arafat and the accompanying delegation were seen off at the airport by Prince Hassan. Mr. Kabarti, Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, the minister of public works and housing and other senior officials.

The King is recuperating after undergoing a minor knee surgery.

Petra said late Tuesday that the King telephoned Mr. Arafat and thanked him for visiting him and wishing him speedy recovery.

The King also reaffirmed Jordan's continued support for the Palestinian people in their struggle for their rights, Petra added.

Abu Marzouk said to drop battle

(Continued from page 12)

been trying to agree on terms of the group's political participation. Last week, PNA President Yasser Arafat appointed a former Hamas leader, Tajal Sadr, to his cabinet.

Dr. Abu Marzouk was detained reentering the United States in the summer of 1995 when immigration inspectors realised his name had been added to a list of suspected terrorists.

Dr. Abu Marzouk has lived in Virginia for 15 years, but is not a citizen.

Israel has agreed to return the bodies of two Palestinians from Hamas, including one killed after kidnapping an Israeli soldier in 1994, a relative said Tuesday.

The relative of Salah Jadallah said Israel would return Jadallah's body, along with

that of Hassan Abbas, another Hamas militant from Gaza, on Wednesday at the border post between Gaza and Israel.

Israeli soldiers killed Jadallah in October 1994 while attempting to free Nachshon Wachsmann, who had been kidnapped by Hamas militants. Wachsmann was also killed in the army raid.

Abbas, who like Jadallah belonged to the Hamas military wing, was killed the same month by police when he opened fire at an open-air cafe in West Jerusalem, killing two civilians.

Israel agreed to return the bodies after Palestinian police convinced Hamas last year to reveal the location of the remains of Ilan Saadun, another kidnapped Israeli soldier. The body was found near Tel Aviv.

Israeli deputies more amenable

(Continued from page 1)

ring to the coalition agreement between his party and the Likud that affirmed the Third Way's main platform — that the Golan will not be returned to Syria.

Israel-Syria talks stalled 11 months ago, even though Syria and the previous Labour government were close to a deal that would have returned the Golan to Syria in exchange for peace.

Mr. Netanyahu has refused Syria's demand that he resume the talks from where they left off and embrace his predecessors' commitments.

Mr. Netanyahu said Monday he expected a compromise formula to emerge: "I assume that with mutual goodwill and the help of the United States we will reach a formula that will enable the renewal of direct talks ... we will know very soon."

U.S. President Bill Clinton is expected to meet with Mr. Netanyahu and other regional leaders in coming weeks, and there were also other efforts to jump-start the peace process.

In Damascus, European Union (EU) special envoy Miguel Moratinos arrived Monday for a four-day visit after meeting with Israeli leaders.

"The Israelis told me that they are fully committed to resume talks with the Syrians," said Mr. Moratinos. "I am little more optimistic than before." In Israel, Mr. Moratinos had said the EU was eager to complement

the U.S. role in the peace process.

Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Victor Posolavuk was also in Israel Sunday in a bid to invigorate Russia's role in the peace process. He said his country has already sent letters urging the sides to resume negotiations.

Israel's Yediot Ahronot daily said Friday that Foreign Minister Levy recently initiated contacts with Syria with the help of Cyprus and Luxembourg. The paper said the sides were close to a compromise formula that would pave the way for resuming the talks and contain both sides' interpretation of what was achieved so far.

Mr. Netanyahu's office also announced Monday that if the talks with Syria resume Israel's delegation would be supervised by Mr. Levy and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, both relative moderates.

Damascus said meanwhile a document drawn up by members of the two main Israeli political parties on the final-status talks with the Palestinians is a farce that will block creation of an independent Palestinian state.

"Under this formula, Israel gets its hands on more than 85 per cent of the area of the West Bank while placing the Palestinians under its permanent supervision," the government newspaper Tishrin said.

Sudan claims advance in east

(Continued from page 1)

the foreign factor in the fighting in the east.

"The U.S. embassy's attempt to deny the Ethiopian or Eritrean regime's involvement in the aggression comes in the context of the conspiracy to attack Sudan through its neighbours," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

"(It was like) a political circular issued by a body hostile to the government of Sudan. Issuing such statements will not help clear the air or provide an atmosphere favourable to constructive dialogue," it added.

The U.S. statement last week said: "Sudan's claims of foreign involvement in its civil war are an attempt to distract the Sudanese people and the international community from what is essentially a domestic political crisis."

Sudan has also denied charges by rebels that Iran sent arms to the country.

"These are allegations the opposition wants to give as an excuse for its defeat in the confrontation," government spokesman said.

Sudanese rebels said Sunday that Iran supplied the country's government with 60 Russian-made tanks and six warplanes. After the initial gains by the rebels, the government appeared to be slowing the advance.

Sudan has called a general mobilisation to fight the rebels and is pressing Islamic countries for help.

The country's charge d'affaires in Iran, Ahmad Al Tijani, also issued a denial in Tehran that his government was receiving arms from the Iranians.

"The allegations are aimed at distorting the facts, misleading public opinion in the region ... and attracting more help from foreign colonial powers," Mr. Tijani was quoted as saying Tuesday by the English-language Tehran Times.

Iraq expects delivery in April

(Continued from page 12)

wheat from Australia and Canada; rice from Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan and the United States; cooking oil from Jordan, Egypt, Malaysia and Turkey; tea from India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, China; and lentils from Turkey, Morocco, Sudan and China.

The government, he said, can only provide baby milk to children one year and younger.

"We want to add those more than one year" after more funds are available, he said.

Mr. Saleh said the oil-rich country — which spent \$250 million per month on food before the Gulf war — would not return to normal until the U.N. sanctions were lifted completely.

The Security Council will not lift the sanctions until the U.N. certifies that Iraq has eliminated all weapons of mass destruction. Iraq blames the U.N. chief weapons inspector, Rolf Ekeus, and the United States for not agreeing to the certification.

"I think Iraq has fulfilled its obligation ... and it's really a crime in the history of mankind to keep 22 million inhabitants under the decisions of Mr. Ekeus and the

United States," Mr. Saleh said. "It's genocide for the Iraqi people."

An Iraqi government newspaper said on Tuesday that several European and Arab airlines were trying to get permission from the U.N. to allow them fly food and medicine to Iraq under an oil-for-food deal.

Al Jumhuriya newspaper quoted Director-General of state-run Iraqi Airways Rabee' Mohammad Saleh, as saying that several airlines had informed him that they had submitted requests to the Sanctions Committee.

"Several international airlines sent telegrams to the Iraqi Airways informing it that they had submitted requests to the United Nations Sanctions Committee to allow them to transport foodstuffs, medicine and other essential goods to Iraq under the oil-for-food deal," the paper said.

Mr. Saleh did not name the companies but said five European and Arab airlines had expressed their readiness to transport humanitarian goods to Iraq under the pact.

He said several others were trying to obtain permission to allow them to resume their passenger flights to Iraq.

Draft law on competition and anti-monopoly draws sharp criticism from private sector

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A new competition and anti-monopolies draft law approved by the Cabinet and forwarded to Parliament in mid-December continues to draw sharp criticism from the private sector as the bill awaits parliamentary discussion. The problem? Its size, its content, its lack of clarity and its intractability, the draft's critics say.

The draft is one in a series of new business and investment laws being reviewed by Parliament. Among the new draft laws are the companies and customs laws which are viewed as essential for Jordan's economic progress and its pending accession to the WTO and European partnership agreements. The competition and anti-monopolies law is intended to gear up the private sector for the eventual end to the Ministry of Supply's jurisdiction in price fixing.

Ghazi Kassar, spokesperson for the Amman Chamber of Commerce, said that although the chamber's committee currently reviewing the law hasn't issued a final statement, it has "numerous objections" to the draft.

The language isn't very specific," Mr. Kassar says. "To begin with, we are skeptical of the draft's definition of the word 'monopoly.' The draft states that a monopoly is 'the capability to affect the market.'"

"That's a bit effervescent," says Mr. Kassar.

Many from the private sector have contended that the draft, rather than diminishing government interference in private sector affairs, has actually maintained it in various forms, and has left several loopholes that would allow the government to maintain its own monopolies under certain conditions and for certain periods of time.

A primary objection to the draft is that it stipulates the formation of an nine-member "authority" with powers to see that the law is implemented and the creation of a special court to hear cases of alleged violations of the law. Of the authority's nine members, seven would be from the government, rather than representatives from private sector.

The court "to prevent monopoly according to law", whose two judges will be nominated by the judiciary, may also include the appointment, by the Cabinet, of a third expert specialised in commerce.

"We think that the idea of a 'court' is a bit dubious, since we are not sure from where this court receives its authority," said Mr. Kassar.

The draft also includes various articles that would not allow companies to sell equipment, goods or services below their cost, and that agents must comply in full with all conditions provided by the supplier with regards to pricing and selling.

"This very simply contradicts the notion of a 'free market'," said Ali Dajani, advisor at the Amman Chamber of Industry, "and it is a blatant interference in private sector affairs."

Additionally, the small size of the Jordanian market and the uncertainty of Jordan's future status within the WTO and its pending economic agreement with the European Union under the draft law "superfluous" and premature by many.

"I don't think that our experience justifies this law," said Mr. Dajani. "We don't have numerous companies that could create monopolies in the sense of 'cartels', which is what the law is referring to."

The Jordanian market, can barely accommodate one producer of a certain product, he said, so there is rarely any incentive for other companies to enter the market, therefore, certain companies or producers may enjoy a de facto monopoly.

"Our problem is market manipulation," said Mr. Dajani, "as we saw with the prices of coffee several months ago."

The advisor was making reference to an incident in 1995 when the Ministry of Supply took a decision to float coffee prices in the country after international prices of coffee rose. Importers, in turn, increased their coffee prices even though most coffee on the market or in store at the time had been purchased at lower prices.

A memo from the Chamber of Industry submitted to Ministry of Trade and Industry

makes this claim, and hints that more suitable legislation might include articles that prevent exploitation of consumers through market manipulation.

Also, says Mr. Kassar, Jordan is unsure of the outcome of Jordan's negotiations with both the EU and the WTO.

"We don't know what the conditions will be, and we have no experience in this," he said, "so we think it may be premature to pass such a law at this time."

Swiss study: Asian economic miracle can continue for many decades

GENEVA (R) — Asia's "economic miracle" of the past 30 years, the future of which has been questioned as growth in key countries has slowed, could continue for many decades, according to an authoritative Swiss report.

But further advance well into the 21st century will depend on governments pursuing policies that sustain high savings and investment and bring reform to agriculture and services, said the report from the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS).

"If East Asian nations remain open to competition and technology, and can avoid the pitfalls of heavy social subsidies as their economies mature, an Asian 'miracle' can continue for many decades," it declared.

"High saving and a social commitment to education explain part of the Asian success. They will not quickly fade," the report said.

"Policies that subsidise sunset sectors like agriculture or heavy industry and those that artificially raise labour or capital costs appear more important in explaining slowing productivity growth than any shortage of new technology," the UBS analysts pointed out.

Compiled by analysts at the bank, Switzerland's biggest and a major player on the global financial scene, the report appeared in the latest edition of the UBS English-language magazine, International Finance.

The UBS analysts said their findings cast doubt on suggestions by some prominent econ-

Algeria earns \$12.5b from oil, gas exports

PARIS (R) — The value of Algeria's exports of oil and gas rose by 29 per cent to \$12.5 billion in 1996 from the year before, Energy and Mining Minister Amar Makhloufi has told the state-run radio.

Energy officials said the rise was mainly due to higher international oil prices.

Mr. Makhloufi, who was not asked to comment on the reasons for the higher exports, said Algeria earned an average \$21.5 per barrel in 1996 against a budgeted average of \$16-\$17 per barrel.

Algeria's oil and gas exports were worth \$9.7 billion in 1995 against \$8.5 billion, according to official figures. The government has fore-

cast \$538 million of non-oil and gas exports for 1996 compared with \$350 million in the previous year.

Algeria has forecast \$16 billion in receipts from oil and gas exports by the year 2000, but official figures showed that production in the North African country generally fell, with one sector showing a 36 per cent drop.

"The industrial production for 1996 was distinguished by an acute deterioration, except for the hydrocarbon sectors and to a lesser extent, building

materials," said the Algerian government in a report carried by the official Algerian news agency APS.

The rise in production in the energy sector peaked with the 8.6 increase in the liquefied natural gas sector, the report said. Officials have said that Algerian oil and gas exports in 1996 accounted for more than 94 per cent of the North African OPEC member's foreign earnings.

Algeria's total exports in the first three quarters of 1996 were \$8.49 billion compared with \$6.76 billion for the same period last year, according to the latest official data.

Production in the non-oil and gas industrial sectors — over-

whelmingly covering state-owned industries — dropped by 36 per cent in the textile industry to 0.2 in the production of welding materials. The second worst hit industry was iron and steel, which slumped by 29 per cent, the figures showed.

But a boost in the agricultural sector helped Algeria reduce its imports of cereals, with a record harvest of 4.6 million tonnes in 1996 compared with 2.13 million the previous year, the report added.

The government has pumped more than 600 billion dinars (\$11 billion) into the ailing state-owned industrial companies in the past six years to try to rescue jobs.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates										
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	IL	NLG	FRF	
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6667	0.6923	0.7564	121.13	1.3368	1616.90	1.8514	5.5808	
DM Mark	0.6000	1.0000	0.5548	0.5833	73.46	0.8116	980.24	1.1232	3.3726	
GB Sterling	1.4122	2.8579	1.0000	1.0536	193.62	2.1561	2807.41	3.3662	8.9573	
CH Franc	0.7602	1.1532	0.4336	1.0000	84.82	0.9367	1131.02	1.2958	3.6989	
JP Yen	0.0083	1.3594	0.5109	1.1772	1.0000	1.1035	133.33	152.83	4.5843	
CA Dollar	0.7470	1.2257	0.4526	1.0675	1.10	1.0000	1194.00	1.3788	4.1345	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0180	0.3829	0.0662	1335.65	0.8271	11.44	3.4360	3.0003	
NY Guilders	0.5401	0.6637	0.3344	0.7710	85.42	0.7222	672.40	1.144	3.0003	
FR Franc	0.1758	0.2964	0.1114	0.25705	21.78	0.2408	33.28	33.2800		

Energy		USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	22.20	22.95				
WTI	22.95	23.80				
Bony	23.20	22.95				
Dubai	20.27	20.28				
UL Gas	210.00	205.00				

Metal Prices		Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	353	353.5	
Silver (oz)	4.97	4.99	
Platinum (oz)	357.55	358.55	
Al (3 Months)	1628	1630	
Cu (3 Months)	2241	2242	
Zn (3 Months)	1128	1130	
Lead (3 Months)	678	677	
Ni (3 Months)	7260	7265	

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Chg	% Chg	High	Low	Pr Ch			
New York	DOW JONES	6754.59	93.9	1.41	6760.37	8663	8660.89		
New York	S&P 500	776.13	11.11	1.45	776.23	785.02	785.02		
London	FT-SE 100	4237.4	25.4	0.8	4238.3	4191.3	4212		
Tokyo	Nikkei 225	17796.57	491.67	2.8	17796.6	17195.3	17254.9		
Paris	CAC 40	2482.76	47.59	1.85	2484.26	2431.72	2435.17		
Frankfurt	DAX	2889.33	5.2	0.17	2893.43	2884.08	2894.25		

Energy		Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lb)	140.67	Spot	
Cocoa (c/lb)	1339	Spot	
Sugar (c/lb)	301.2	Spot	
Wheat (c/lb)	133	Spot	
Soy (c/lb)	22.86	Spot	
Tee (c/lb)	115	Spot	
Barley (c/lb)	215	Spot	
Rice (c/lb)	470	Spot	

JOD Cross Rates		Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	1.1417	1.1474	
DE Mark	0.4291	0.4302	
CH Franc	0.4932	0.4957	
FR Franc	0.127	0.1278	
JP Yen	0.5686	0.5695	
NL Guilder	0.361	0.3629	
IT Lira	0.4208	0.4243	

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- What's for dinner
- The World According to
- Viewpoint
- Its capital
- Musical
- Sector
- Male voice
- Military acronym
- Vertical airfoils
- nous (confidentially)
- List ender
- Hourglass and scythe toter
- Moon goddess
- Ment
- avis
- Entertainer Reynolds
- Myron or William
- Passport endorsement
- Artist Bonheur
- Soul
- Envelope abbr.
- One who loves excessively
- Beige
- Killer whale
- German or Waters
- Actor Liam
- Interlock
- Smile
- German songs
- Recipient of two mules
- Actor's quest
- Matriulate
- Toolbox item
- Streamlet
- Muse of lync poetry
- Being
- Toward shelter
- Senior member
- Hollow stem
- Actress Daly

by Eugene Puffenberger

DOWN

- Customs
- Overact
- From birth
- Joel C. Harris character
- Electrician
- Opera highlight
- French income
- Former Turkish title
- Author of "Tristram Shandy"
- Fast time?
- Against
- Average
- Corner
- Wagner's earth goddess
- "Peter Pan" dog
- Assert
- Movie set at V.M.I.
- Two
- Enlightened words?
- Nobleman
- City on the Ome
- Single time
- Take on
- Ltd. counterpart
- Con game
- Mr. Amaz
- Lollapalooza
- Walking on air
- Flower
- Pastor's home
- Lace mat
- Barkin of films
- U.S. Grant opponent
- Kernel
- Lacquer box
- Postponement
- Chapeau's place
- Sublunae

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Get to work fixing up your home today, however don't invite anyone in to visit until the process is completed. Avoid becoming involved in a disagreement between a family member and an outsider or there could be difficulty.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Take time out from your routines today to labour on your appearance so that you present a favourable impression. Plan some amusements later this evening which will lift your spirits and make your loved ones happy.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Labour on establishing more harmony at home with your ones and there will be peace and contentment present. Don't take any risks if you go out with your mate this evening. Put pleasures aside at this time and be practical.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Leave home early today and get started on shopping and visiting, however only for constructive purposes. Be well-prepared with data for some important writing and thereby you can become quite successful.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Drive carefully today, while on the highway and be sure to count your change when shopping, so that you will have sufficient funds. Do something to improve your budget and postpone a visit at this time to see friends.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't allow yourself to become confused today over monetary affairs and you can eliminate any difficulty. Use your fine sense of humour to please some good friends later this evening. Carefully consider your situation before acting.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) It would be wise to listen to suggestions from a superior today since your ideas are not as fruitful. Be sure your mate agrees with your plans for a splurge later this evening or there could be much difficulty.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't permit anyone to involve you in a crooked scheme today, or you could get into a great deal of difficulty. Get out socially with good friends and you can all have fun together tonight.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A close friend could unwittingly give you the wrong advice today, so don't rush blindly into anything until you study every situation. Plan carefully this evening before introducing your mate around to avoid any embarrassing situation.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Don't try to wrench a favour from a superior today, however join a fellow associate at some new kind of activity which will be successful. You may be forgettable at this time, so jot down notes on important matters.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Avoid a new contact today who has an eye on your assets, and keep busy with those who are helpful to you. Do something nice for your mate, however be practical about it and don't be extravagant on the price.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Forget those daily routines, and find some new activity today which can bring you advancement. A little risk later this evening may work out fine, however be sure not to push your luck and defeat your objectives.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Hilton Hotels International Inc. has made a \$1.5 billion bid to acquire ITT Hotels Inc., a move that would create a new global hotel giant. The bid, announced Tuesday, is the latest in a series of aggressive moves by Hilton to expand its international presence. Hilton's bid is subject to regulatory approval and a shareholder vote. ITT Hotels, which has a portfolio of over 1,000 hotels in more than 100 countries, is a publicly traded company. Hilton's bid represents a significant increase in value for ITT shareholders. The move is seen as a major consolidation in the hotel industry.

Investment in a new hotel chain, the Radi Hotel Group, has been announced. The group, which is led by a former executive of a major hotel chain, plans to launch a new line of hotels in the near future. The group's plans include the development of a new hotel chain that will focus on providing high-quality service and amenities at a competitive price. The group's results to date have been positive, and it is expected that the new chain will be a success.

Capital was raised for the Radi Hotel Group, which is a new venture. The group, which is led by a former executive of a major hotel chain, plans to launch a new line of hotels in the near future. The group's plans include the development of a new hotel chain that will focus on providing high-quality service and amenities at a competitive price. The group's results to date have been positive, and it is expected that the new chain will be a success.

At a large public meeting, the Radi Hotel Group announced its plans for the future. The group, which is led by a former executive of a major hotel chain, plans to launch a new line of hotels in the near future. The group's plans include the development of a new hotel chain that will focus on providing high-quality service and amenities at a competitive price. The group's results to date have been positive, and it is expected that the new chain will be a success.

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Gascoigne in doubt for World Cup qualifier against Italy

GLASGOW (AFP) — England and Rangers midfielder Paul Gascoigne was to undergo an X-ray for an ankle injury that could put him in doubt for the World Cup clash against Italy in February.

Gascoigne was flown back to Glasgow on Monday night after damaging his ankle in a collision with Ajax goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar in the European six-a-side tournament in Amsterdam.

The player needed crutches to help him limp away from the Dutch capital and the Ibrox club immediately scheduled an X-ray on his left leg.

Even if there is no break, the injury appeared serious, and with England coach Glen Hoddle naming his 22-man squad for the Wembley clash with Cesare Maldini's new-look Azzurri on Thursday it was the last thing he needed.

Gascoigne's injury was the second massive blow of the day for Hoddle, who could be without as many as seven likely choices.

Tottenham striker Teddy Sheringham was ruled out of the Italy equation when he broke down on the first day back in training after his ankle injury.

Sheringham limped away part-way through the session and Spurs boss Gerry Francis admitted: "It's bad news for England and it's not too good for me either."

"I know it would be nice to see him playing for England and for me. Unfortunately these things happen."

Sheringham's absence means Hoddle is definitely without three men, with for-



Glasgow Rangers forward Paul Gascoigne (R) duels for the ball with Ajax defender Danny Blind during the first stage of the Euro 6's - six-a-side soccer tournament in Amsterdam. Ajax won the opening match 6-2 (Reuters photo)

mer skipper David Platt (hamstring) and Everton wing-back Andy Hinchcliffe (cruciate ligaments) also missing.

Another Spurs man, Darren Anderton, yet to play for Hoddle, made his first steps along the recovery road by playing 45 minutes of a practice match yes-

terday, but is nowhere near match-fit after his knee problem.

The news got slightly better for Hoddle on Tuesday morning when Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson said he hoped Beckham could be fit enough to play against

Wimbledon Wednesday. But with Beckham's United team-mate Phil Neville still recovering from glandular fever, Hoddle's options are growing increasingly limited for a game in which victory would make England red-hot favourites to qualify for France 98 by right.

Dane Olsen takes up new challenge at Ajax

COPENHAGEN (R) — Morten Olsen, the former Danish international who is to replace Louis Van Gaal as coach of Ajax Amsterdam next season, is a passionate perfectionist with clear ideas on how soccer should be played.

"Football should not just be result-oriented," the Belgium-based coach told Reuters in a telephone interview. "The game has gone off at the wrong tangent in recent years. Far too many trainers practise excessively defensive and cautious strategies."

"It is not just a question of winning, it is the way you do it. As a coach I want to be able to sit back and enjoy my team playing good, positive soccer."

"I want to work with a club with the right philosophy, a place where football is alive."

Ajax certainly fit that bill despite their poor league form this season. They became European champions in 1995 and were beaten finalists last season, playing fluent exciting football with an exciting young side nur-

tured by the hugely successful Van Gaal.

But their appointment of Olsen is something of a surprise.

The 47-year-old performed illustriously on the football pitch, playing a record 102 games for Denmark, but his managerial career has so far been mixed.

As coach at top Danish side Brøndby, where he was in charge for two years, Olsen crafted a side which reached the semifinals of the UEFA Cup — the best achievement of a Danish club in European competition.

In 1992 he moved to German side Cologne. After four seasons in charge and without a trophy to his name he was sacked in late 1995.

Shortly before his appointment at Ajax Olsen told Danish television he wanted to become a leading club trainer again after an 18-month period in the cold.

Olsen is still something of a hero in Denmark, despite his absence from the domestic football scene since 1989.

He began his playing career at Vordingborg, before moving to Nykøbing, both in south-west Denmark, and then to Cercle Brugge, racing white Derek Molenbeek and Anderlecht in Belgium before ending his career as a player at Cologne.

He became captain of the Danish national team in 1983, contributing to Denmark's first ever qualification for the European Championship in France in 1984.

He captained Denmark at the Mexico World Cup in 1986, helping to place the team firmly among the world football elite.

His swansong with the Danes was a 4-0 victory over Brazil in a friendly in Copenhagen in 1989, in which he scored from a penalty.

Olsen's club performances abroad were also distinguished.

While he was at Anderlecht they twice won the Belgian championship and in 1983 won the UEFA Cup by beating Benfica 1-0.

Davenport shows gold medal form in Tokyo

TOKYO (AFP) — Olympic champion Lindsay Davenport powered her way past Taiwan's No. 1 Wang Shi-ting in the first round of the ATP women's tennis tournament here Tuesday.

The 20-year-old from California, runner-up at the \$965,000 tournament here two years ago, took the first five games in a row on her way to a 6-1, 6-2 victory.

"It's a very fast court. Luckily, we had three days to practice and I felt I hit the ball very well today," said Davenport, the World No. 9.

Wang double-faulted on important points — giving the American break points in the second and fourth games and another on the American's advantage point to go down 2-3 in the second set.

Wang had four break points throughout the match, but each time, Davenport forced an error to save them and wrapped up the 50-minute match when Wang hit another forehand too long.

Thai wild card entrant Tamasugarn earned a re-match against Davenport when she defeated Australian Open doubles champion Natasha Zvereva 6-2, 6-1.

The 19-year-old Thai advanced to the Australian Open third round to move up to her career highest at 57th, but crashed to Davenport taking only one game off the American.

Dutch power-server Brenda Schultz-MacCarthy, the eighth seed, had a tough time beating Ruxandra Dragomir of Romania 5-7, 6-4, 6-2, while Japan's No. 1 Ai Sugiyama struggled to beat French qualifier Alexia Dechaume-Balleret 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (2/7), 6-4.

In other matches, American Kimberly Po downed Katarina Studenikova of Slovakia 6-4, 6-1, while compatriot Lisa Raymond edged past Seda Noorlander of the Netherlands 7-5, 6-7 (3/7), 7-5.

Gloria Pizzichini of Italy was a 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 7-6 (7/5) winner over Japan's Rika Hiraki.



Phoenix Suns point guard Kevin Johnson (L) tries to dribble around Miami Heat guard Voshon Lenard January 27. The Heat won 125-97 (Reuters photo)

Heat erupt to beat Suns 125-97

MIAMI (R) — Alonzo Mourning scored 10 of his 20 points in the first quarter as the Miami Heat posted their most points of the season in their first home victory over the Phoenix Suns, 125-97 Monday.

Tim Hardaway had 21 points and 10 assists for the Heat, who never trailed and shattered their previous season high of 111, set in double overtime at Sacramento on November 22nd.

"We shot 63 per cent. Man, somewhere along the way we've got to bottle that," Miami coach Pat Riley said. "The best thing about the whole game was that we bounced back from a tough loss yesterday (at New York). It was a great win."

"That was just a good old-fashioned spanking," Suns coach Danny Ainge said. "They were good. We couldn't stop them in the post. Their 63 percent was just a direct

result of us not playing tough defence."

Loren Meyer had 18 points for the Suns, who had won their first nine visits to Miami arena.

At Golden State, Latrell Sprewell had 33 points and 11 assists and Joe Smith added 30 points to lead the Golden State Warriors a 122-97 victory over the Vancouver Grizzlies.

The Warriors made 20 consecutive free throws and finished 35-for-37 from the foul line.

Rookie Shareef Abdur-Rahim scored 22 points and Anthony Peeler added 21 for the Grizzlies, who have lost five straight and 15 of their last 17 games. Vancouver fell to 0-2 under new coach Stu Jackson.

Philippoussis ruled out of Davis Cup tie

SYDNEY (R) — Australia's hopes of upsetting holders France in the Davis Cup first round next month suffered a blow Tuesday when top singles player Mark Philippoussis was ruled out because of injury.

Philippoussis has failed to recover from the tendinitis in his right forearm that forced his withdrawal before the start of this month's Australian Open in Melbourne.

Sandon Stolle was called into the squad as Philippoussis' replacement to face the French on grass at white city in Sydney.

"It was too risky to try Philippoussis' arm (in a) best-of-five set matches on grass," Newcombe said.

"You go out and try to play too early on an arm injury and it could put you out for a long time. He's obviously pretty disappointed but he's just hoping that it's not something that's going to linger," Newcombe said.

Stolle, ranked 52 in the world, joined Pat Rafter and doubles specialists Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge in the squad for the match between February 7-9.

Jason Stoltenberg, a semifinalist on grass at last year's Wimbledon, is also unavailable for the tie because of a wrist injury.

"I think this match is a really honest 50-50 call," Newcombe said. "France are the defending champions — they're going to fight like tigers to protect that."

France, who beat Sweden 3-2 to win the Davis Cup last month, will choose their four-man team from Guy Forget, Cedric Pioline, Arnaud Boetsch, Guillaume Raoux and Lionel Roux.

Zoff to manage Lazio for now

ROME (AFP) — Ajax Amsterdam's Louis Van Gaal and Sampdoria's Blackburn-bound coach Sven Goran Eriksson

are being tipped to take over next season at Lazio, after the sacking of Zdenek Zeman. Club president Dino

Zoff, who coached Lazio from 1990 to 1994 before moving up to the boardroom, will manage the side until the end of the season and try to haul them out of a crisis.

Last weekend's 2-1 home defeat to Bologna left Lazio ever closer to the relegation zone, after a season of failure in UEFA and Italian Cup competition.

Among the possible candidates being tipped for the permanent job at the helm of Lazio are Van Gaal, who has long made it clear he wants to leave Ajax Amsterdam at the end of the season. Eriksson is similarly

leaving Sampdoria, although his current destination is Premiership strugglers Blackburn Rovers, while another option is Claudio Ranieri, whose days are believed to be numbered at Fiorentina.

Another possibility is Zoff himself. Italy's legendary goalkeeper and member of the 1982 world cup winning squad.

The 54-year-old did not achieve great things with Lazio, but he guided Juventus to Italian Cup and UEFA Cup success during his two seasons from 1988-90.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANJANI HUSSEIN

WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKS Q72 OA QJ92 AKJ54

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

10 Pass 10 Pass

What do you bid now?

Q.2 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKJ73 QAS OA QJ92 AKS

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

10 Pass 10 Pass

What do you bid now?

Q.3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKS QJ92 AKS QJ92

Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one club. What do you bid now?

Q.4 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKS QJ92 AKS QJ92

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

10 20 7

What action do you take?

AKS QJ92 AKS QJ92

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

10 Pass 10 Pass

What do you bid now?

Q.5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKS QJ92 AKS QJ92

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

10 Pass 10 Pass

What do you bid now?

Q.6 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKS QJ92 AKS QJ92

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

10 20 7

What action do you take?

Look for answers on Monday.



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CINEMA TEL:634144
PHILADELPHIA "2"

Michael Douglas & Elite Ping ... in
THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238
PLAZA

Keanu Reeves & Dolph Lundgren...in
Johnny Mnemonic

Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420
CONCORD

DUMB & DUMBER

Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30
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Coming Soon... "Custom made Citizen"
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Ramadan Holiday
with the new play entitled
Amen.. Ya Ho

NEW YORK (AP) — The Super Bowl XXXI was the highest rated telecast in history, and Fox Sports Net was the only network to have the Super Bowl on Monday.

The Packers over the Cleveland Patriots on Fox Sports Net, a 14-17 Super Bowl rating, rating made the game with an estimated 100 million people watching.

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Baghdad sees April delivery of food under deal with U.N.

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's trade minister said Tuesday that food under the U.N.-approved "oil-for-food" programme will not be distributed until April, complaining bureaucratic U.N. procedures delayed the distribution.

The government had hoped to get extra rations of flour, rice, sugar and other commodities to the public in time for the feast next month that marks the end of the Ramadan.

Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh blamed the United Nations oversight committee for the delay, saying it would not approve food contracts until money from the sale of Iraqi oil was in the bank. Pumping began Dec. 10.

That means the arrival of the first contract (of food) won't be until the end of February or beginning of March ... and we can't distribute food for the people unless there is at least one commodity sufficient for the whole population," Mr. Saleh said in an interview with the Associated Press.

This means "the proper time would be April for distribution," he said.

All of the country's 22 million people currently are eligible for monthly rations of cooking oil, flour, sugar, rice and tea that provide about one-third of the 3,000 calories health officials recommend for daily consumption.

When the U.N. programme is implemented, Mr. Saleh said, the quantity of flour, rice and sugar will be increased and lentils will be added to the package.

raising the ration to about two-thirds of the recommended daily caloric requirement.

"There is no animal protein in the programme because of the limits of the money," Mr. Saleh lamented. He said the government would add eggs, cheese and meat if the United Nations "hopefully increases the amount of money" Iraq can get under the programme.

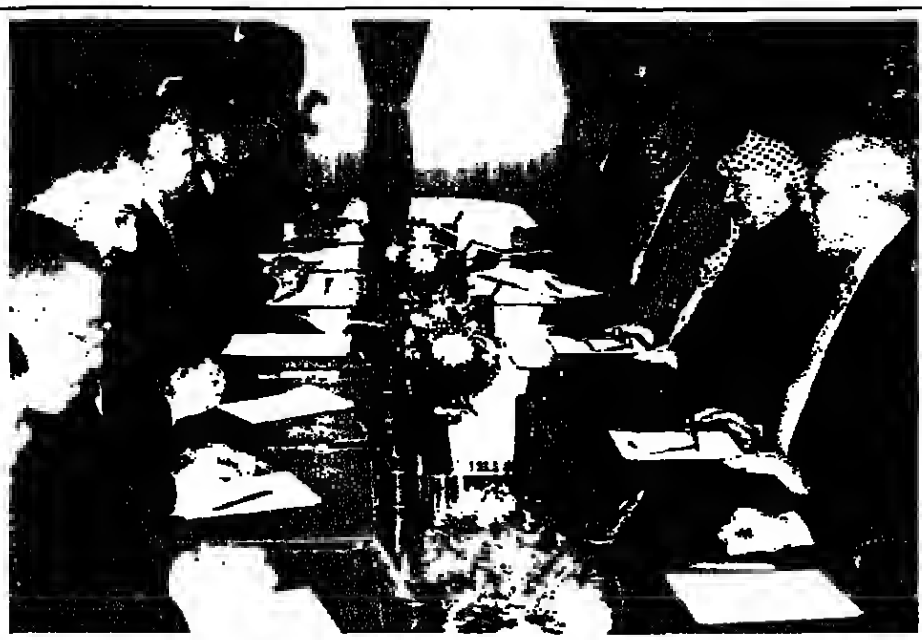
U.N. sanctions imposed after Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait prevented it from selling oil, its economic mainstay. Shortages of food and medicine and high market prices have put necessities out of the reach of many Iraqis.

The oil-for-food programme, approved by the U.N. Security Council last May, allows Iraq to sell \$2 billion in oil over six months to buy needed food and medicine.

Mr. Saleh said Iraq will get about \$1.32 billion of the proceeds, after funds are deducted to cover Gulf war reparations and U.N. expenses. Of this, about \$260 million will be distributed to the semi-autonomous Kurdish north.

Nearly \$1 billion will be spent on food, with about \$210 million going for medicine and medical supplies. Smaller sums will be allocated for water purification, electrical system repair, agriculture and education.

Mr. Saleh said the government was negotiating or had concluded dozens of food contracts. They involve-



JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN TALKS: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday chair Jordanian-Palestinian talks on the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations in Amman (photo by Yousef Allan)

Shooting erupts as Lima police parade past hostage compound

LIMA (AFP) — Gunfire rang out around the Japanese ambassador's residence as police put on a show of force around the mansion where rebels are holed up with 72 hostages, raising concern among Japanese authorities.

The military parade that sparked the shooting came despite a call from Tokyo for Peru's police to end provocations around the Japanese embassy mansion where 52 Peruvians, 19 Japanese and one Bolivian are held hostage.

A short burst of gunfire was heard as dozens of troops circled the compound on Monday after Peruvian police in an armoured vehicle made obscene gestures, taunting the rebels inside. Tokyo again called for calm after this latest incident.

Implicitly voicing displeasure, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto made the request to Peru's President Alberto Fujimori in a telephone conversation, government officials said.

"We understand the need to tighten security around the compound, but we would like you to give full consideration to that police action ... do not bring about any unexpected situations," Mr. Hashimoto was quoted as telling Mr. Fujimori.

The scene was calm if noisy early Tuesday as huge speakers placed just outside the embassy compound resounded with military music for 30 minutes from 6:00 a.m. (1100 GMT). The guerrillas reacted by blasting rebel songs in the other direction over loudspeakers.

"I'm worried whether irritation among the terrorists would intensify due to moves by the special police unit," Mr. Hashimoto told reporters Tuesday. "I'm calling (the Peruvian government's) attention to such moves." On Monday afternoon, as military music blared, one tank, three armoured troop carriers, a pickup and about 100 heavily armed police from a special operations unit marched around the compound for about two hours.

Martial music poured from speakers piled three metres high that had been installed around the white walled compound around midday.

Two rebels could be seen watching from a window of the home. One rebel in a second floor window flashed two fingers in a "V" for victory.

But midway through the parade, a short burst of gunfire rang out as police in an armoured troop carrier waved obscene gestures at the rebels.

Other heavily armed police, wearing bulletproof vests, threw themselves on the ground or crouched in a firing position.

Police showed reporters the rear door of one troop carrier that was pocked with three bullet marks, but it was not immediately clear if they resulted from the shooting.

"Everybody should calm down and let the desire for peace prevail," the Peruvian bishops' conference said in a statement after the incident.

The leftist rebels are demanding the release of some 440 jailed rebels in exchange for the hostages. Talks have stalled since the government has refused to discuss any prisoner release.

Mr. Fujimori's point man on the hostage crisis, Education Minister Domingo Palerm, announced shortly after the gunfire that a locale had been found for talks between the government and rebels boled up in the compound.

He said that an armoured vehicle had been found to transport guerrillas to the talks. There was no immediate word as to whether it was acceptable to the rebels.

Despite Tokyo's implicit criticism, Japan's Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda noted that the Peruvian government was making progress towards setting up a negotiating commission for the direct talks.

"I see steady progress towards creating the commission ... I hope the MRTA rebels will make a positive response," he told a press conference in Tokyo. Even before this latest incident, Tokyo was worried about violence around the compound.

Israeli soldiers under orders not to shoot at Jew shooting at Arabs

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli troops in Hebron are under orders never to open fire on Jewish civilians, even if they see them shooting at Arabs, an Israeli human rights group said Tuesday.

The Betsalem group said it learned about the open-fire orders from a sergeant in the army reserves, a lawyer by profession, who was among the Israeli troops in Hebron being briefed by the commander of the region, "Colonel Gadi."

The open-fire orders first came to light in 1994, after a Jewish settler, Baruch Goldstein, shot and killed at least 30 Muslim worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

An officer in the paramilitary border police told a commission of inquiry into the mosque massacre that he could not have stopped Mr. Goldstein even if he had been present during the attack because standing orders barred troops from shooting at Israeli civilians.

The army later said the orders had been corrected, but Betsalem said Tuesday the latest evidence suggests no changes were made.

The latest shooting incident in Hebron occurred on New Year's Day when an off-duty soldier, Noam Friedman, opened fire on Palestinian shoppers, wounding five. Friedman stood just a few metres away from an Israeli army post, and emptied an ammunition clip before he was jumped and overpowered by an Israeli soldier.

Betsalem noted that if an Arab fires on a Jew in Hebron, Israeli soldiers have orders to shoot without hesitation. The group urged the army's judge advocate general, Uri Shoham, to change the open fire orders and investigate "Colonel Gadi."

"Troops cannot be given the impression that the life of a Jewish attacker is worth more than those of the people he is shooting at," Betsalem wrote in a letter to Brigadier General Shoham.

Ahmad Tibi, an adviser to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, said the open-fire orders are "immoral, racist and dangerous."

'Abu Marzouk drops bid against U.S. extradition'

TEL AVIV (AP) — A Hamas leader jailed in the United States has decided to drop his fight against extradition to Israel where he faces murder and conspiracy charges, an Israeli daily said Tuesday.

The Yediot Ahronot daily said Musa Mobammad Abu Marzouk, a 45-year-old Palestinian, is expected to be extradited within two months to Israel which has accused him of financing and planning attacks against Israelis.

Hamas is a militant group opposed to the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace agreements. Dr. Abu Marzouk has said he was a leader of Hamas' political wing, and has denied any control over terrorist actions.

Yediot said U.S. prosecutors have informed Israeli officials of Dr. Abu Marzouk's decision to stop fighting his extradition.

Israeli officials had assumed Dr. Abu Marzouk would try to drag out legal proceedings in the United States as much as possible to avoid extradition, and were surprised by his decision, Yediot said.

Yigal Palmor, a spokesman of Israel's foreign ministry, said he was not aware of any information from the United States reaching Israel that Dr. Abu Marzouk would be extradited soon.

An Abu Marzouk trial in Israel could cause new complications in the peace talks between the Palestinians and Israel's hardline government. Hamas has threatened to carry out new suicide attacks if Dr. Abu Marzouk stands trial in the Jewish state.

The Palestinian National Authority demanded that Dr. Abu Marzouk be extradited to areas under its control. Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestinian cabinet, said Tuesday she recently received a call from Dr. Abu Marzouk's wife.

"She (the wife) told me she was hoping that he could be extradited back to Palestine. I told her I would try to help in the issue," said Ms. Ashrawi, adding that she did not know whether Dr. Abu Marzouk had decided to drop his fight against extradition.

Khaled Kidreh, the Palestinian attorney general, said Tuesday that Dr. Abu Marzouk "has not given up his fight for extradition to Israel."

Mr. Kidreh said Dr. Abu Marzouk was willing to leave the United States "on condition that he comes to the Palestinian territories."

Mr. Kidreh said the PNA would do everything it could to bring Dr. Abu Marzouk to the autonomous Palestinian areas, but had not decided whether he would be put on trial in a Palestinian court.

Hamas is the PNA's most serious political rival, but in recent weeks the two have



Workers facing layoffs win \$46 million

JACKSON, Michigan (R) — A group of Michigan factory workers who were preparing for impending layoffs reported to work as usual on Monday, even after a lottery ticket they bought won a \$46 million jackpot on Friday.

Shirley Johnson said she and her 16 previously unlucky co-workers would continue "to work until we get our pink slip." Kellogg Industries Co., a surgical and orthopaedic supplies plant in Jackson, Michigan, that was scheduled to close in June, notified its 85 workers last November that it would close the 90-year-old factory and transfer production to a newer plant in California. Two weeks ago, some of the workers formed a lottery club and bought 19 tickets for Friday's "big game" multi-state lottery.

Menem wants powerboat champion in congress

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Argentine President Carlos Menem said he was proposing world powerboat champion Daniel Scioli to stand for congress for the ruling Peronist Party in mid-term elections in October. Menem described Scioli as "a sportsman who has triumphed at home and abroad and made the Argentine flag fly proudly."

The 39-year-old Argentine has won six world titles in 11 years' racing, despite having to compete with one false arm since 1989, when he lost his right arm in a race. Menem said the party was free to accept or not his choice to head the list of candidates for the chamber of deputies for Buenos Aires.

Royal yacht plan too taxing for Britons

LONDON (R) — Britons oppose by a margin of three to one the government's plan to fund a new royal yacht from taxpayers' money, according to an opinion poll. An ICM poll in the Guardian newspaper asked people if they approved or disapproved of the government's decision to spend 60 million sterling (\$100 million) of public money on a replacement for the present royal yacht, Britannia. In reply, 72 per cent said they disapproved, with only 24 per cent approving. Britannia is on its last voyage before being taken out of service after 44 years.

Conservatives plan to privatise U.K. taxmen

LONDON (R) — Britain's ruling Conservatives are drawing up plans for the privatisation of the tax-raising Inland Revenue, the Guardian newspaper said. The Guardian said the plan, which would involve the sale of 450 tax offices and the introduction of private contractors to assess tax returns, was being prepared for the Conservative election manifesto. Prime Minister John Major wants to hold the election on May 1. The privatisation is aimed at raising 250 million sterling (\$402 million) a year, the paper said. The Guardian said the plan would mean job losses at the Inland Revenue, which employs 60,000 people.

Dog robbed

SALINE, Michigan (AP) — Customers at Harry's service station delighted in tipping Charlie, a 7-year-old golden retriever trained to take bills and deliver change. But someone broke in recently and raided an estimated \$80 to \$100 in a jar set aside for Charlie's tips. "Nothing else was taken," manager Rick Parsons said last week. "Probably some kids." Parsons' father, Harry, said Charlie has been a public relations windfall and a paw print even appears on credit card receipts. "When someone gives you a \$20 bill for their gas, you're generally pleased," he said. "But when they give it to Charlie, they're downright happy."

Macarena dance linked to 'Satan worship' — author

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian author claims to have discovered a link between the Macarena dance craze and Satanic rites performed by alleged devil worshippers here.

Author Sayyed Mahruss made the claim Tuesday as Pope Shenouda III, head of the Coptic Church in Egypt, urged the authorities to impose the "stiffest" possible sanctions against dozens of youths under investigation for alleged "Satan worship."

Mr. Mahruss told the opposition Al Wafd newspaper that he had made the link to the Macarena during research for his recently published book on Satan worship.

"During my research for the book I went to many discos, and I noticed that each time they played the Macarena columns of smoke filled the discos and that the movements of the dance were part of satanic rites," he said.

"I asked a boy and a girl about these movements, and they told me they were Satan-worshipping rites," he said.

Mr. Mahruss also claimed that "Satan worshipping" first emerged in Egypt after the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979 and Cairo's opening to the West "when European magazines and newspapers began flooding the market."

At that time, he said, many youths were invited to Israel by "Zionist organisations as part of efforts to maintain Egyptian-Israeli friendship bonds."

"The young people returned from Israel with strange ideas and ways of dressing," he said.

Al Wafd also quoted Pope Shenouda III as calling for "the stiffest possible sanctions against Satan worshippers" and saying that "atheism is the result of all sorts of corruption and alienations throughout history."

On Monday, Egypt's mufti, Sheikh Nasr Farid Wassel, urged "Satan worshippers" to repent and said that otherwise, under Islamic law, they could be sentenced to death.

Last week the Egyptian authorities dismantled a sect which urged "scorn for religions and the veneration of Satan," police said. Police rounded up 76 youths aged between 17 and 20 and were still looking for 19 others, including the daughter of an Egyptian actress.

Greece joins European drug row with Turkey

ATHENS (Agencies) — Greece joined the diplomatic drug row with Turkey on Tuesday, saying it will give its European Union (EU) partners data on Ankara's alleged role in pushing hard drugs on Europe.

The drug trafficking problem, in which Turkish officials are implicated, is serious and we are getting involved with the topic," said Greek government spokesman Dimitrios Reppas.

"We have information on the issue that we will present to the responsible sectors of the European Union and the problem will be raised at the Council of Europe meeting on general affairs in February," he said.

The Greek allegations come on the heels of statements by a German judge and a British government minister which suggested that Turkish government was involved in drug trafficking.

In one instance, Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller, who in her past job as prime minister favoured closer Turkish relations with the EU and continued good ties with the West, has been cited in particular.

Turkey strongly denies any government involvement in the illicit drugs trade, saying it alone accounted for 40 per cent of all heroin seizures in the world in the past year.

Mrs. Ciller left Monday for Rome to meet European colleagues.

Costas Bikas, spokesman for Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos, said a memo on "elements gathered by the Greek government" will be put forward to EU members.

Relations between Athens and Ankara, never warm, deteriorated in recent weeks after Turkey threatened to intervene in Cyprus if the Greek-backed government in Nicosia deployed Russia-made missiles.

Earlier, Greek Public Order Minister Yeorios Romaos denounced "Turkey's role in the production and trafficking of heroin for Europe."

Monitoring schemes and sanctions should be put into place, he added.

"Our country has stressed on many occasions in the EU Council of Ministers and international organisations the role of Turkey in the production and trafficking of heroin towards Europe," he said.

He cited a report from the Europol police liaison agency that claimed that "70 per cent of heroin in Europe came from Turkey" and that "more than 1,100 Turkish drug traffickers were arrested in EU countries in 1995."

"EU countries have acted late, but they have finally understood Turkey's role in the production and trafficking of drugs," he said.

He referred to accusations by Britain's Deputy Home Minister Tom Sackville, who claimed in a Turkish television interview that members of the government in Ankara were involved in drug trafficking towards Britain.

Earlier a German judge raised the same type of allegation, but specifically mentioning Mrs. Ciller, who has since raised the matter with German counterpart Klaus Kinkel.

Later this week Mrs. Ciller is to see Mr. Kinkel and the foreign ministers of Italy, Britain, France and Spain to review ties between Turkey and the European Union, now passing a difficult stage.

"We want to ensure that the gap between Turkey and Europe does not become too wide," a senior European diplomat said in Rome.

"We are hoping that this meeting will be accompanied by a blast of warmth and good feeling that Turkey at last feels it is being taken seriously," the diplomat added.

The five are likely to urge Turkey to lower the beat over Cyprus.

El Al plane that crashed in 1992 carried missiles

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli cargo plane which crashed into an Amsterdam housing block in 1992, killing about 70 people, was carrying missiles and uranium, the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot reported on Tuesday.

The newspaper said the Boeing 747-200 cargo aircraft belonging to the state airline El Al had military spare parts and several sidewinder air-to-air missiles in its hold at the time of the accident.

The newspaper said the presence of the arms on board caused a powerful explosion on impact and helped explain the extent of damage caused to the high-rise housing compound which was occupied mainly by immigrants.

A spokesman for El Al confirmed that the plane was carrying "military spare parts" but categorically denied that any missiles or explosive materials were in the consignment.

"These military parts presented no danger of explosion," Nachman Kleinman told AFP.

Mr. Kleinman also denied Yediot allegations the plane was carrying 400 to 600 kilograms of radioactive uranium which could have caused reported cases of birth defects and cancer among persons living near the crash site.

"Depleted uranium is used to provide balance in the wings of virtually all aircraft built in the world," he said.

"The several hundred kilograms of this non-radioactive material which were in the wings of our Boeing were totally harmless," he said.

The spokesman recalled that an official investigation into the crash had found "that the Boeing company was entirely responsible for the accident due to a serious defect in the engine-support system."



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